ANIMAG

THE MAGAZINE OF JAPANESE ANIMATION

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VOLUME 2

SPT LAYZNER
CRUSHER JOE
LODOSS WARS

Superdimentional Century

Orguss

L A Hero

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Issue No. 2

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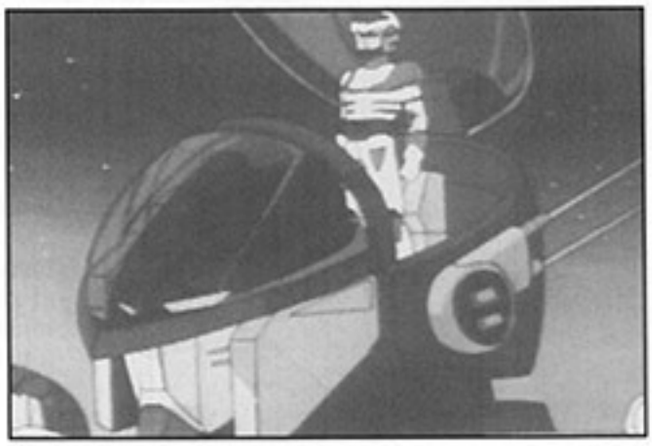
A well-crafted example of the mecha genre, **Layzner's** realistic mechanical designs leave other shows in the dust



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So... you want to write for ANIMAG?

Since ANIMAG receives so many requests for writer's guidelines, it seems that many of our readers would like to write for us. Great! ANIMAG is always open to submissions from hopeful writers (and artists too). We know there's a pool of untapped talent and knowledge out there that could add volumes to ANIMAG's coverage of Japanese animation.

Unfortunately, however, we are unable to use many of the submitted articles we get, for a variety of reasons. For example, we simply won't consider an unformatted article—one that is not typed, double-spaced, and without the all-important SASE (stamped, self-addressed envelope). So, if you want your submission to be read, then simply neatly double-space type your submission and include a SASE. But if you want your article to be *published*, then there are a few other rules you should follow. Many of these rules are outlined in our writer's guidelines. But the single most important rule is:

READ THE MAGAZINE.

ANIMAG publishes very specific types of articles. We provide in-depth, accurate synopses and background information on Japanese animation shows and related topics. Our style is clear, literate, and fairly formal, with none of the "in-jokiness" popular in Japanese animation fanzines and on BBS networks. Reviews and opinions are confined to letter pages, editorials, and to special features by experts in the field. In short, we look at our subject matter seriously and provide the serious facts about Japanese animation shows. (This is not to say that ANIMAG doesn't appreciate humor in or about animation. We wouldn't watch these shows if we didn't love and enjoy them as much as you do. But we feel our role is to provide information first.)

So, **if you want to see your article in ANIMAG, keep in mind the kind of article ANIMAG publishes.** Are you obsessive about a show, know every detail about it, and wish you could see it in the pages of ANIMAG? Then write it! But make sure that your information is accurate and that your love of the show comes second to the facts that other fans (who might potentially love the show just as much) would like to know. We want the good, hard, solid facts. Remember, you can trust the information you read in ANIMAG. Your article should be just as trustworthy.

However, for those who want to write about more than just Japanese animation, ANIMAG is also interested in reading any (in-depth, accurate) article you submit. Articles on related Japanese entertainment, such as wrestling or idol singers, are welcome. The American animation scene is also not entirely beyond ANIMAG's scope—after all, the two worlds often meet. For example, ANIMAG would love to publish an extensively researched account of animation cels, both American and Japanese. What's the current market for cels? Where should you buy them? How much should they cost? How much are they worth? What is the best way to store and take care of them?

Writing an article can be intimidating. Some of our readers may feel that their writing skills aren't quite up to snuff. But have no fear—besides our basic writer's guidelines, ANIMAG can also provide detailed outlines to help you actually write your piece. Don't know what a summary-based article should include? Out format guidelines will tell you exactly what sort of information we require, whether you're covering a one-shot OAV, a TV series, or an ongoing comic book run. Don't know what should go into an introduction? Our introduction format tells you exactly what we're looking for.

ANIMAG would love to receive information-packed submissions from our readers. We want to publish *you*!

Good Luck!
Dana Kurtin
Editor

For copies of ANIMAG's writer guidelines and format guides, send a request and a SASE to: ANIMAG guidelines, P.O. Box 31492 San Francisco, CA 94131.

ANIMATION UPDATE

Ah! My Goddess
Taiho Shichauzo (I'll Arrest You)

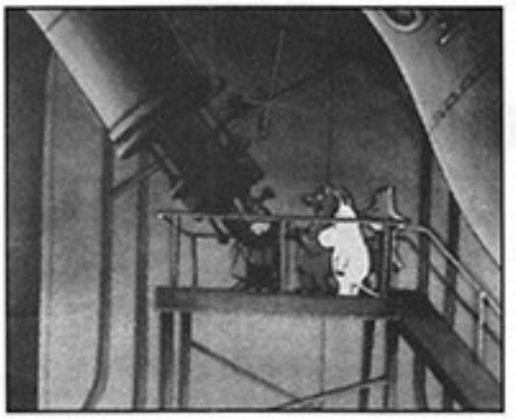
These two comedy manga series, both drawn by popular manga artist Kosuke Fujishima, are each soon to be released as four-volume OAV series. *Ah! My Goddess*, reportedly to be directed by Hiroaki Goda with character designs by Hidenori Matsubara, is slated for release in December; *Taiho Shichauzo* has a scheduled November release.

Ah! My Goddess tells the story of an ingenuous young man who summons a goddess, Belldandy. When she tells him she'll grant one wish, he tells her he wants her to stay with him—sparking a series of adventures with Belldandy and her sisters, Uld and Sculd.

Taiho Shichauzo details the adventures of two female police offers specializing in traffic control who deal with everyday problems with not-so-everyday means. Natsumi, who has extraordinary physical strength, and Miyuki, the mechanical whiz, scrape through some amusing adventures in this light-hearted comedy series.

Comet in Moominland

Originally a series of books by Tove Jansson, the Moominstories originated in Sweden but soon became beloved classics around the world (except in America, which seemed to largely ignore the phenomenon). Moominstories have been animated in Japan before, but this time the most popular Moominbook of all, *Comet in Moominland*, will be released as a full-length feature movie in August.



Somewhere unknown to man lies the Moominvalley, which holds the blue Moominhouse where Moominpapa, Moominmama, and Moomintroll live. When the philosopher Muskrat visits the Moominhouse one dark and stormy night and says that the comet in the sky prophesies doom, Moominpapa suggests that the panicking Moomintroll and his little animal friend Sniff journey to the Observatory on the Lonely Mountains. The Professor there can surely tell them about the habits of comets, just in case one is headed toward Earth.

During their journey to the Lonely Mountains, Moomintroll and Sniff are joined by the wandering, harmonica-playing Snufkin, grumpy moth-collecting Hemulen, and the Snorkmaiden who becomes Moomintroll's eternal love. After plenty of close calls, the party reaches the Lonely Mountains only to learn that the comet is in fact rushing toward Moominvalley. The party speeds back to Moominvalley with the bad news and starts the evacuation to a cave by the sea.

Stories from Apfelland

From the author of *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* and *Arslan's Wars*, Yoshiki Tanaka, comes *Stories from Apfelland*. Originally both a novel and a manga series serialized in the monthly anime magazine *Animage*, *Apfelland* is now in production as an original animation video (OAV).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the kingdom of Apfelland lies in the heart of Middle Europe. As the site of the artery railways interconnecting Europe, the fiercely independent Apfelland is quite a prize—those who control Apfelland could control Europe's transportation system, thus Europe, and thus the world.

When Wel, an orphan of Apfelland's streets, befriends a mysterious girl named Frieda, he learns that she possesses a seal that seems to be linked with Apfelland's destiny. But the proud woman Aryana, whom history has taught to trust no one but her panther Attila, is obsessed with owning the seal. And can Wel and Frieda really trust their friend, seasoned old Renbach?

English Translations from *US Renditions*:

Guyver
This OAV series, based on the manga of the same name, features the exploits of a high school student who, after accidently fusing with an alien armor, must then do battle with both corporate evil and mutated creatures in modern-day Japan. A series of six tapes, two episodes per tape, have been tentatively scheduled for release starting July, 1992.

Macross II
The sequel to the immensely popular *Macross* saga and one of the most eagerly anticipated series of the last five years, *Macross II* contains all new characters (designed by *Macross* artist Haruhiko Mikimoto) in an all new adventure with some familiar mecha designs. The six-episode OAV series appears on three tapes of two episodes each; their tentative release dates begin July, 1992.

Dangaio
OAV adventures *Dangaio 2* and *Dangaio 3* center around four young psychics and their psionic mecha. *Dangaio 2* includes a 10-minute prologue that recaps the adventure in *Dangaio 1*. These two tapes have tentative release dates in February and March of 1992.

Super Dimension Century Orguss
Produced by the creators of *Macross* during the golden age of the transformable robot genre, *Orguss* features character designs by *Macross* artist Haruhiko Mikimoto. Twelve tapes, three episodes per tape, will tentatively be released every three months starting July, 1992.

Mini-Update

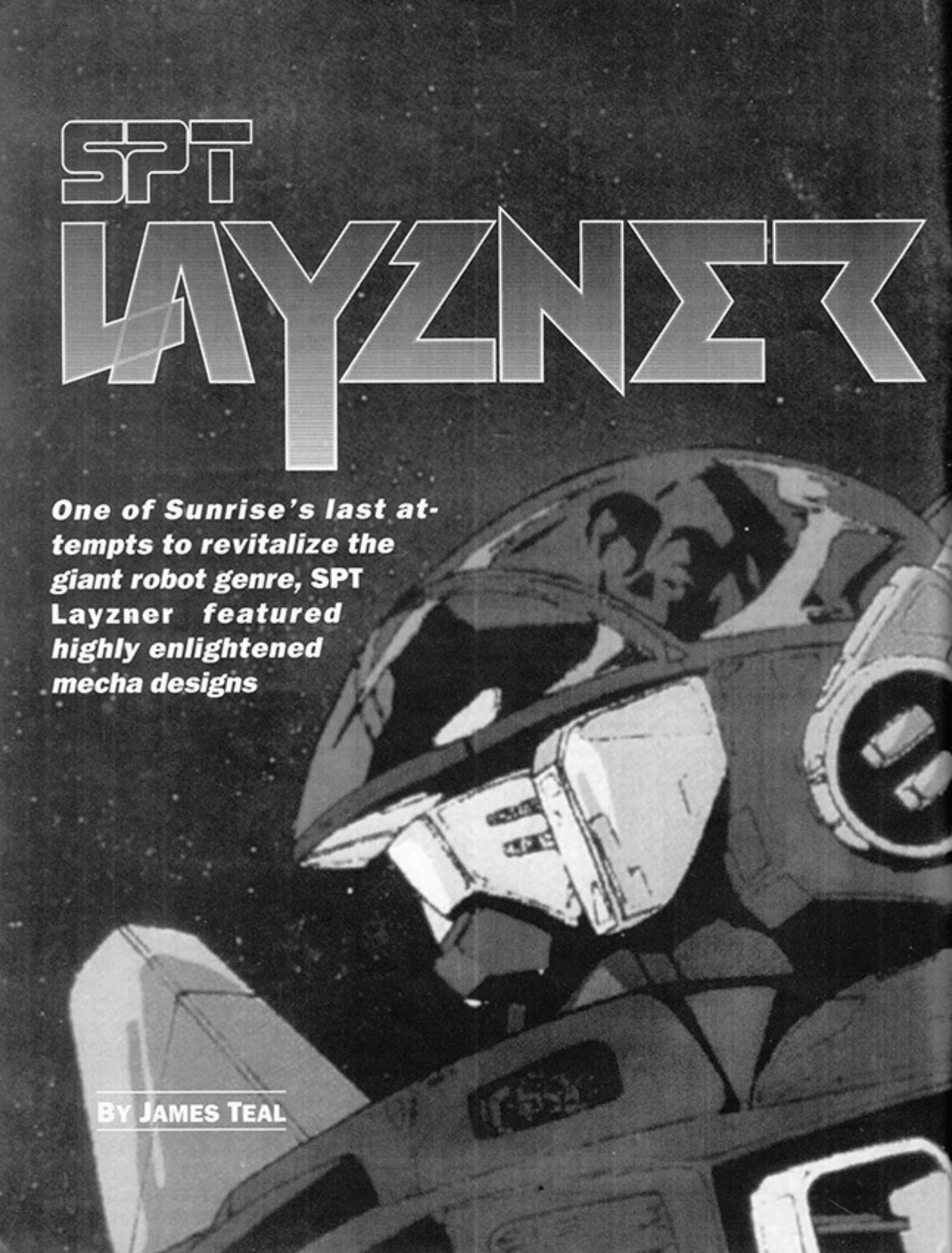
Filena the Eternal

In another place, in another time, a tyrannical empire of free citizens and slaves live restricted lives under the watchful eyes of the state police. One of the few ways a slave can become a free citizen is to become a gladiator—and survive until the term is up. If they live, gladiators are not only granted citizen status, but live as celebrities and are permitted to keep slaves of their own. Of course, very few gladiators survive their term.

Rising-star gladiator Filena is willing to take the chance. Filena, her female identity known only to her mother, always wears a mask when battling her impossibly huge opponents and thinks she may live to make citizen. But suddenly, Filena realizes that something is inherently wrong with her society. Should she lead a plebeian revolution, risking both the life of her young slave girl (who has come to love the mysterious gladiator under the mask) and the loss of the steady income that supports her aged mother? Torn, Filena enters the arena to face her next opponent. . . .

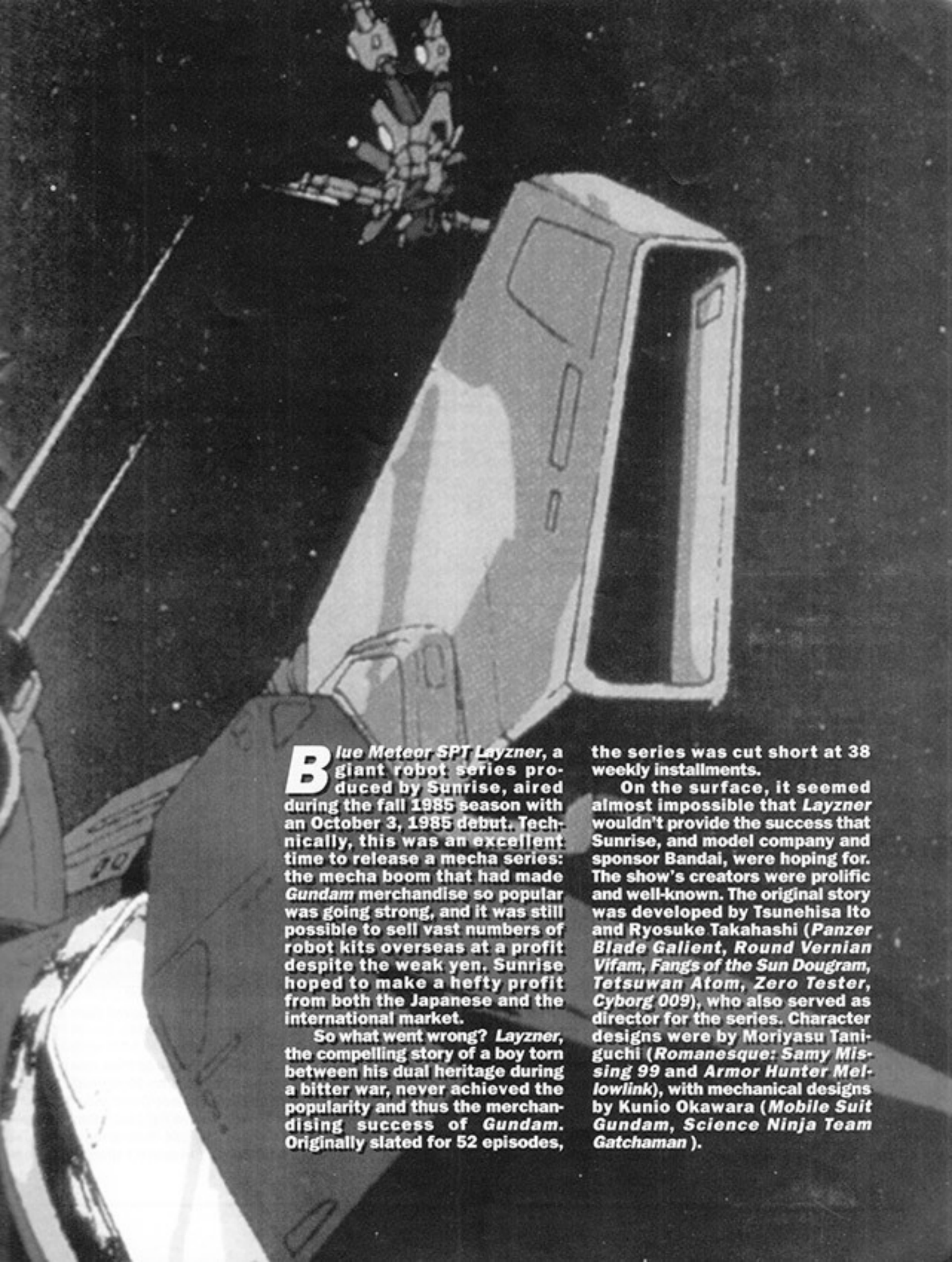
Akemi Takada, character designer for *Creamy Mami*, *Kimagure Orange Road*, and *Patlabor*, illustrated *Filena* when it ran as a serial manga series in *Animage* magazine and joins the OAV's animation staff as character designer.

SPT LAYZNER



One of Sunrise's last attempts to revitalize the giant robot genre,* SPT Layzner *featured highly enlightened mecha designs

BY JAMES TEAL



Blue Meteor SPT Layzner, a giant robot series produced by Sunrise, aired during the fall 1985 season with an October 3, 1985 debut. Technically, this was an excellent time to release a mecha series: the mecha boom that had made *Gundam* merchandise so popular was going strong, and it was still possible to sell vast numbers of robot kits overseas at a profit despite the weak yen. Sunrise hoped to make a hefty profit from both the Japanese and the international market.

So what went wrong? *Layzner*, the compelling story of a boy torn between his dual heritage during a bitter war, never achieved the popularity and thus the merchandising success of *Gundam*. Originally slated for 52 episodes, the series was cut short at 38 weekly installments.

On the surface, it seemed almost impossible that *Layzner* wouldn't provide the success that Sunrise, and model company and sponsor Bandai, were hoping for. The show's creators were prolific and well-known. The original story was developed by Tsunehisa Ito and Ryosuke Takahashi (*Panzer Blade Galient*, *Round Vernian Vifam*, *Fangs of the Sun Dougram*, *Tetsuwan Atom*, *Zero Tester*, *Cyborg 009*), who also served as director for the series. Character designs were by Moriyasu Taniguchi (*Romanesque: Samy Missing 99* and *Armor Hunter Mellowlink*), with mechanical designs by Kunio Okawara (*Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*).

Introduction (cont)

The plot focused on a group of teens caught in a deadly war—a war not only between Earth superpowers, but between Earth and an alien threat. Unlike the squealing, giddy, cute young people depicted in many other animated shows, the teens in *Layzner* were shown reacting to their situation much more intensely. The trauma of seeing friends and loved ones die became a major plot element, one which the creators hoped would draw a big audience response.

But *Layzner*'s true strength was its dynamic, dramatically different mecha sequences. A great deal of thought was put into mecha animation and design. As a result, the movement of the SPT suits was very impressive compared to the mechanical motion shown in other shows—the maneuvering of the machines in space reflected scientific thought on how a body in space actually moves. For example, once in the vacuum of space, the mecha would go through a complicated procedure of equalizing their thrust to prevent drifting. Unlike many other shows, the mecha action in *Layzner* looked technically correct.

Layzner was a simple story that explored its premise well. Unlike *Gundam*, viewers didn't need to have years of watching behind them to understand the action. So why didn't mecha fans flock to the series?

It seems that *Layzner*, designed to ride mecha-oriented *Gundam*'s wave of popularity, was swamped by *Gundam*'s already firmly entrenched hold on the mecha market. Although the show's plot was easy to follow, that simply was not enough to compete with *Zeta Gundam* (and later *Gundam Double Zeta*), which had a huge audience already familiar with its long-running, very complex storyline. *Gundam*'s characters and their complicated lives had already been absorbed by the viewers, who therefore had a vested interest in watching the next episode. *Layzner*, a new show with no ties to a familiar storyline, had no such pull on the audience. (In fact, one of the reasons so many animated sequels are produced by Japanese studios today is because it is so difficult to capture viewers with something new. It is much easier to lure watchers with new stories about characters they already know.)

Another thing that may have contributed to *Layzner*'s early demise was that other shows, such as *Deified Beast Dancougar* and *Ninja Warrior Tobikage*, already had products out on the market. *Layzner* may have been lost in the rush of merchandise, and thus never gained coveted name recognition.

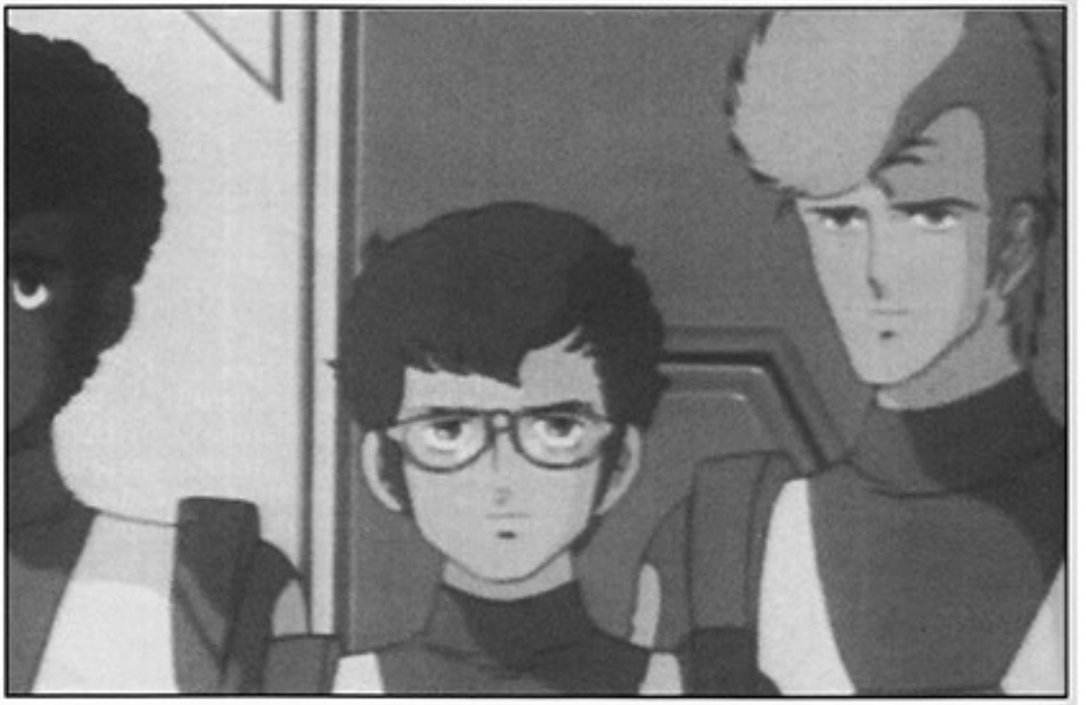
However, the show did earn a loyal fan following which, although not big enough to challenge *Gundam*, was large enough to convince companies such as Toshiba and VAP that video releases of *SPT Layzner* could turn a profit. VAP released the first four episodes in video format while the series was still being aired. Later, Toshiba acquired the license and released three compilation OAVs. Because the TV series' final episode was confusing and inconclusive in its original form, the third Toshiba OAV is actually an extended version of the original episode and provides answers to some nagging questions about the story's final conclusion.

Episode One
On the Red Planet

A space shuttle disturbs the upper atmosphere of Mars as it brakes for reentry. It is quickly met by two American fighters which escort it to air space over the Soviet Mars base. The American fighters break off and head back home as Soviet fighters fly out to meet the shuttle, escorting it for the remainder of its journey.

"October 3, 1996...U.S. planes scramble to greet us. The superpowers have expanded into space. For those of us arriving it was unnerving to see the arms race continued on Mars as it had been on Earth."

"My name is Anna Stephanie. I'm fourteen years old."



The shuttle lands at the United Nations Mars Observation Base (UNMOB). The passengers are greeted in the main meeting room with a warm round of applause from the base's staff. Dr. Elizabeth Clabery, instructor of the group, officially announces the arrival of the sixteen members of the "Cosmic Culture Club," a group of students from different countries to be stationed at the base for six months.

Anna Stephanie, the youngest of the Club, is singled out for encouragement by Officer Libre and presented with the first rose to bloom on Mars by staff member Bill Conners.

"This base here on Mars," says Libre, "is like a seed of the human race...ready to blossom and grow out into space."

"The Cosmic Culture Club was started by the U.N. two years ago. When I first heard of it I signed up immediately, hoping to become eligible to participate in the Mars excursion experiment."

After settling into their new quarters, the students meet for orientation in the main classroom with Base Commander Glenn.

"You, the young generation, will pave the way for the future of continued development in space," Glenn tells them.

"For the six months you will be here, I want you to learn the importance of what it means to live in space."

When an urgent message calls him away from the orientation, the students' worries that the Soviets and the U.S. have gone to war are met by adult reassurances that there's nothing to worry about.

At the base's control tower, systems operators desperately try to track an elusive signal via radar. After one of the observation posts is destroyed, Commander Glenn makes a fruitless attempt to contact both American and Soviet bases. Panic sets in when klaxons begin to blare.

Despite Dr. Elizabeth Clabery's protests, students David, Juno and Roanne leave the classroom to investigate. Bolts of lightning-like energy impact with the force of high explosives, shaking the entire complex and revealing the true target...a giant blue robot pursued by three grey ones of different design but similar function. When Elizabeth finally catches up with the errant pupils, she orders the awe-stricken students to don their space suits and report to the main meeting room.

As the battle rages outside, the staff wonders what country could have the technology to build such advanced manipulator suits. Commander Glenn gives the evacuation order as Elizabeth tells the sixteen students to put on their helmets and follow her orders exactly.

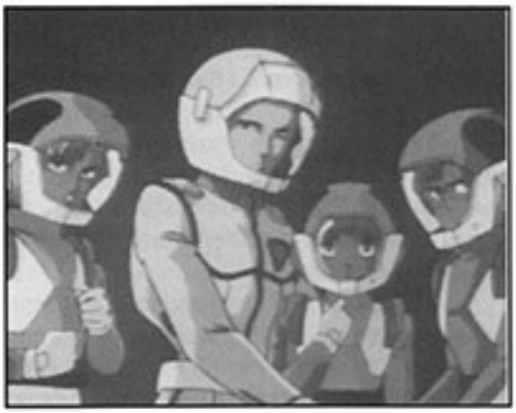
While two of the greys turn their fire upon the blue, the third grey sets about destroying the base's radar array. Commander Glenn attempts radio contact.

"This quadrant is under the jurisdiction of the United Nations," Glenn says. "Do you realize the consequences if you continue this military exercise here?"

The grey levels its rifle, destroying the entire control tower with a single shot.

The meeting room's roof abruptly collapses, but Elizabeth quickly resumes control and orders Arthur and Roanne to take the shocked Anna and Simone to the safety of the basement level. David tries desperately to stir the motionless Juno, who is pinned under heavy debris, but is forced to leave him behind. As he and Elizabeth run for safety, another blast of energy lances down from the sky, leaving no hope for Juno's survival. Shockwaves automatically cause a blast door to drop into place as David, anguished, cries out his friend's name.

As the group runs for the basement shelter they spot three Soviet fighters



entering the battle. One of the greys destroys a Soviet fighter with a single shot. The greys easily avoid the remaining fighters' missiles and shoot down a second Soviet during the exchange. Taking advantge of the grey's distraction, the blue robot lands a shot on one of the greys; rather than risking further damage the three of them retreat, one destroying the remaining Soviet fighter as they withdraw. The blue gives chase.

"If they shot down the Soviets, then they must be American," says Arthur.

"But then what about the blue one they were chasing?" asks Roanne.

The group continues to the basement level, assuming they must be the only members of the Cosmic Culture Club still surviving.

"He was only fifty centimeters away," David mourns, thinking of Juno. "Fifty centimeters was the difference between life and death. What the hell is going on?!"

Over David's cries, the group hears the sound of something very heavy walking above ground.

On the surface, Roanne and Arthur find a group of surviving base personnel firing at the blue robot with machine guns. The enormous blue robot, over nine meters tall, shows no signs of hostility as the bullets bounce off, forcing the staff to recognize the futility of their actions. Saddened to realize that they, these few staff members, the three other students, and their teacher are the only other survivors, Roanne and David prepare to defend themselves against the worst as they return to the basement.

Footsteps approach the sealed door as the hidden survivors wait in nervous anticipation. The door unlocks and slides open to reveal a lone figure in a white space suit. As the figure steps forward, U.N.M.O.B. staffer Bill fires a warning shot at its feet.

"Don't come any closer!" he screams.

"Don't shoot," the figure says calmly, removing his helmet. "I come from Gurados. My name is Eiji. Earth is in great danger."

"At the time, no one knew what he meant...but I could feel that it was the truth."

Episode Two
His Name is Eiji

"October, 1996...Those of us on the United Nations Mars observation base were swept into a battle we didn't understand. Only eleven of us survived. And then he came."

"Earth is threatened," Eiji tells the U.N. Mars base survivors. While Nicolaiev searches the stranger for weapons, Bill holds the boy at gunpoint, demanding to know whether Eiji is from the U.S. or the U.S.S.R.

"I'm from Gurados," Eiji responds simply. "It's in the Udoria System."

A skeptical Bill questions him again, asking why Americans or Soviets would attack a United Nations base. Eiji's answer remains the same.

"We hadn't fully grasped the situation yet. Everything that had happened clouded our ability to think rationally."

High-pitched electronic sounds begin to emit from Eiji's helmet, increasing the tension in the room. Springing into action, Eiji disarms Bill and throws him to the floor. Nicolaiev grabs Eiji; Eiji spins him into Bob. The two men entangled, Eiji snatches up his helmet and escapes.

On the surface, Eiji hurries back into the cockpit of his blue SuperPowered Tracer (SPT) Layzner. As he straps himself in, Layzner's computer "Rei" relays tactical information. The sounds emitted from Eiji's helmet earlier were Rei's warning that sensors had picked up an incoming target.

Eiji pilots the Layzner away from the base. In the distance, a Gurados tripod carrier dispatches three grey SPTs. As they close distance with the Layzner, Rei

Albatro Null Eiji Asuka

The 16-year-old hybrid son of an Earthling father and a Guradosian mother, Eiji turns against his homeworld when Gurados invades Earth's solar system. While Eiji is basically a pacifist and dislikes killing (he continually orders the Layzner's computer, Rei, to find targets other than a SPT's cockpit), he feels he must intervene to prevent Earth's total subjugation. Eiji's exposure to the members of the Cosmic Culture Club is the catalyst to the slow development of his human personality.

identifies the approaching units. Two of them are SPT Bravers, the same type Eiji fought previously. The third is the Grimekaiser, its pilot known only too well to Eiji: Ahmos Gale. The two are good friends, and Eiji's older sister is Gale's fiancée. They would prefer not to fight each other.

"Answer me," Gale broadcasts. "Come back with me quietly before things get any worse."

Eiji flies the Layzner close to the ground without answering, its thrust kicking up a fierce dust cloud. Zigzagging through the canyons of Mars and avoiding potshots from the two Bravers, Eiji answers, "I'm sorry, I've got to ask you to let me go."

Not wanting to kill any pilots, Eiji orders Rei to highlight targets on the other SPTs so he can cripple, not destroy, them. Eiji continues his evasive maneuvers while Rei scans and records the layout of the surrounding terrain.

Back at the base, Bill attempts to contact either the American or the Soviet military bases while Bob and Nicolaiev continue to search for other survivors. They radio Elizabeth requesting that she come topside to "retrieve one of her students." She goes to the surface to find David, who has returned to the blast door sealing off the tomb of Juno and the other students.

"Juno's on the other side of this door," David sobs. "He's probably still waiting for me."

"Juno's still with you in your heart," Elizabeth says consolingly.

Elsewhere, Eiji continues his defensive struggle against the two Bravers. Rei dumps some of the Layzner's excess fluids as the blue unit heads for a tight network of canyons and crevices. The combination of fluid and dust makes a visually impenetrable cloud into which Eiji ejects an ECM/LCM (electronic and lasered counter measures) jammer cartridge to disable the Bravers' and Grimekaiser's sensors. Piloting directly toward a particularly tight and twisting canyon, Eiji navigates by the terrain maps recorded earlier by Rei. Thier sensors down and blinded by the dust cloud, Gale and the two Braver pilots continually crash into canyon walls and each other.

As Gale tries to flush Eiji from the canyons, the pilots of the two Bravers run multiple scans on the area from above the dust cloud. One of them locates the base survivors from their heat traces. Gale sends both of them to deal with the base, and it is their brutal assault that finally draws Eiji out

of hiding to try and stop them.

"Why do you defend them, Eiji?" Gale asks. "What good is it to protect an Earthling base?"

Eiji maintains the Layzner's defensive posture even though Gale has stopped firing. Gale suddenly realizes why Eiji is resisting.

"Of course," he says. "I forgot. You're half-Earthling. Is that why you stowed away on Gresco's fleet and stole the SPT?"

Eiji asks for his forgiveness, but Gale responds,"Open your eyes, Eiji. You know all the trouble that'll be caused by the expansion of the Earthlings into space."

"But why do you have to wipe them out?" Eiji begs. "Half the survivors are just kids my age!"

"Whether you like it or not, we're going to complete our mission!" Gale retorts.

Eiji tenses for a battle he now fears to be inevitable, while down in the underground control room the eleven survivors view the standoff above them.

Gale gives the command to destroy the base and any remaining survivors. The three SPTs open fire, laying waste to the few structures that remain standing. Eiji hopes to retaliate, but the only target acquisition Rei will grant him is the Grimekaiser's head...the location of the SPT's cockpit.

As Eiji struggles with the decision to take the shot, he hears his sister's voice and remembers how she told him of her wedding engagement with Gale. Refusing to slay his future brother-in-law, Eiji opens the Layzner's cockpit hatch and steps outside. Shocked, Gale stops firing.

"If you're going to kill them, kill me first!"

Eiji shouts. "I have the same red blood as they do! Shoot me before you shoot them!"

Seeing his young friend's resolve, Gale orders his subordinates to cease their onslaught on the base.

"It appears that this has decided our two paths," Gale says. "Next time we meet, I won't be able to hold back."

He signals to his wingmen and the three SPTs take off.

"I couldn't believe that we had been saved... It was like a dream. What was even more unbelievable was that the boy who said he was from 'Gurados' had laid his life on the line to save us."

Episode Three
Believing in the Eyes

Eiji's story of his Guradosian origin is very difficult for the survivors to believe. As the U.N. base staff members interrogate him, Elizabeth goes to check on her five students. They are skeptical of Eiji's story but can find no alternate explanation for his SPT.

On board the massive Gurados mothership, Gale explains his actions on the Mars mission to the leader of the Gurados Military, Gresco. "It seems you did not understand my orders, Gale," Gresco says ominously. "You were told to deal with the traitor."

"I tried to coerce him into returning without any unnecessary bloodshed," Gale replies in his defense.

Zuhl, Gresco's second in command, points out that Eiji is half Earthling, but Gale argues that because he was born and reared on Gurados Eiji should have no allegiance to Earth.

"His body is still polluted by Earth blood! He's already disrupted this mission. If he reaches Earth, the entire operation could be jeopardized!" Gale decides.

Gresco dismisses Gale's request for one more chance. As two guards escort him away, Gale encounters another of Gurados' top pilots, Gosterro.

"Looks like you screwed up, Gale," Gosterro greets him cheerfully. "Thanks to you, now I've got something to relieve my boredom."

Gale shudders to realize that Gosterro is his replacement.

"I'm really going to enjoy this assignment," Gosterro continues. "Eiji may have been too soft to fire at any of your vital areas, but you were even more foolish to let him live." Gosterro turns, then pauses. "You always were quick with the women though," he recalls in a low angry voice. "I won't forget that."

"He holds a grudge because of Julia," Gale thinks. "Be careful, Eiji."

As night falls on Mars the harsh winds blow more fiercely. Bill and Bob examine the Layzner but conclude it can't be of Earth origin and head back to the base. Arthur, listening in on the adults' interrogation of Eiji, overhears comments about a human-alien hybrid and an astronaut named Ken Asuka. Elizabeth later mentions that Asuka was a pilot lost during an earlier Japanese space mission.

Eiji explains to his interrogators that the Gurados plan to cause confusion and start World War III before they invade. Upon hearing this, the five U.N. staff members rush to attempt contact with the American and Soviet military bases once more. Taking Eiji's helmet, they lock him in a room by himself. Only Anna remains to listen to his pleas that he be allowed to warn the governments of Earth. She is convinced of his story by the sincerity in his eyes.

Unable to contact either military base, the adults decide to leave for the American base in the morning. Anna is trying to convince the adults that Eiji is telling the truth when the alarms on Eiji's helmet suddenly begin to whine again.

Back in Eiji's holding cell, David startles Eiji by breaking in with a gun in hand.

"Juno died because of you!" David accuses. "If you hadn't shown up, none of this would have happened!"

In the control center Anna snatches up Eiji's helmet and bolts from the room before anyone can stop her.

"Say something!" David demands, slamming Eiji into a wall. "Something like, 'I'm sorry' or 'Forgive me'!"

When Eiji remains silent, David levels the gun at his head. "Do you want to die?!" he shouts.

Anna, keening helmet in hand, and Elizabeth intervene. As Elizabeth demands an explanation from David, Eiji urgently warns everyone of the returning enemy. When Anna returns his helmet, he thanks her and leaves without interference. The United Nations Base survivors are finally coming to realize that Eiji may be the only one who can protect them.

As a Gurados tripod carrier descends into the upper atmosphere, three SPTs launch: Gosterro's wingmen Gasten and Roberiah in their Bravers and Gosterro in his

The Cosmic Culture Club:

Anna Stephanie
The youngest member of the CCC, Anna's quiet, reserved nature belies her 14 years. Intuitive and empathetic, she is able to respond to the emotional output of the people around her and is the first to like and trust Eiji.

David Rutherford
A headstrong American, the 17-year-old David blames Eiji for the tragedies that befall the group—and especially for the death of his best friend, Juno. A slave to his emotions, David's impulsive and reckless behavior is the result of his inability to deal with his overwhelming feelings of loss and fear.

Juno
David's best friend and roommate.

Simone Reflan

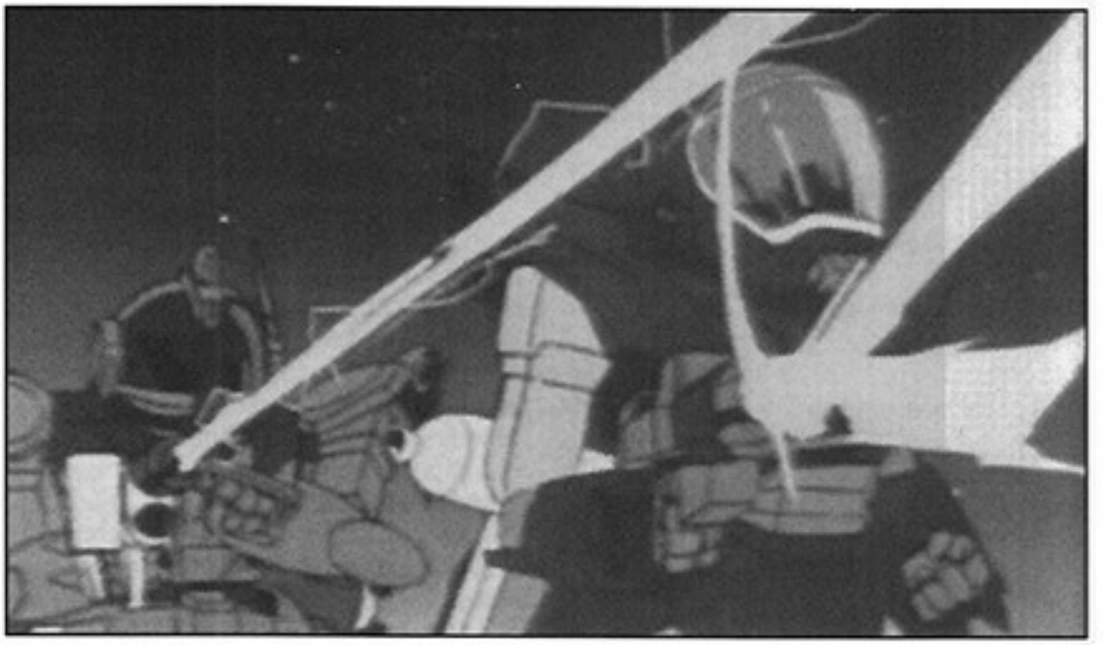
Sixteen-year-old Simone, the daughter of a wealthy Frenchman and an English aristocrat, is sometimes stubborn, cynical and selfish. Although she is strongly attracted to Eiji, her pride won't let her tell him so.

Arthur Cummings Jr.

Despite being the oldest member of the CCC (at 17 years and 5 months), Arthur's seniority doesn't make him the automatic leader of the group. A meek, weak-willed boy, Arthur's attempts to please others mean that he takes no responsibility for himself. Simone especially can railroad Arthur into whatever she wants, since Arthur has a serious crush on her.

Roanne Demitrich

Quiet but extremely knowledgeable, 15-year-old Roanne from Switzerland has by far the most level head and observant eye of the CCC. Always one step ahead of the others, Roanne is constantly evaluating situations for the best possible options. But Roanne doesn't



own unique SPT, the Bullgrenn. Eiji tries to prepare the Layzner for combat as quickly as possible, but Rei informs him it will take time to thaw the limbs—Mars' frigid temperature has frozen the Layzner's joints.

As Gosterro descends, his computer tells him the Layzner is incapable of movement and that now is a good chance to destroy it. "No, that wouldn't be any fun," he smiles to himself.

The three SPTs begin strafing the base as Eiji fires at Gosterro, hoping to divert his attention. "I want you to understand the futility of your actions," Gosterro broadcasts tauntingly.

"I was trying to avoid needless fighting," Eiji responds, searching for some compassion in his adversary.

"I'm not going to waste time debating with you the way Gale did!" Gosterro sneers.

As the they exchange fire, Gosterro notices Eiji's reluctance to target anything potentially fatal. "I knew you didn't have the guts to kill anybody," he laughs. "That means I can toy with you as long as I want!"

In the U.N. complex, the survivors retreat to the lower-level reactor room. "This is hopeless!" Simone says. "We're all just going to die here!"

May tries to console her, saying that they're in the sturdiest facility on the base, when the shockwave from an explosion shakes the entire room.

Bill assesses the damage and realizes that the reactor will soon explode. Directing the others to the garage where the all-terrain vehicles are located, he overloads the reactor to increase the magnitude of the explosion.

The survivors board two six-wheeled ATVs and speed off as Gosterro's well-placed shots take their toll on the Layzner's systems.

"Enough fun! It's time to end this!" Gosterro laughs, targeting the Layzner's power core. Before he can fire, the reactor explosion blasts upward through the ground, the shockwave wrenching the Bullgrenn's rifle from its hand. When Gosterro finally regains his bearings he sees the Layzner poised to fire—directly at his cockpit.

"Leave now or else!" Eiji threatens.

"Your inability to finish off an enemy will be your undoing," Gosterro snarls as he retreats.

"There was hardly anything of the United Nations base left. Now we had even lost our home. If he doesn't protect us, we will surely die. We have to believe in him."

Episode Four
Escape Leaving the Heart Behind

"The boy from Gurados said that Earth was in danger. When I saw his eyes I believed in him. He's the only one who can save us...we have to believe in him."

On board Gosterro's tripod carrier, repair crews work feverishly to restore the Bullgrenn to a battle-ready condition. "That punk kid's gonna suffer a long time for what he's done," Gosterro swears under his breath.

Roberiah arrives on the bridge to report their progress to the mothership but Gosterro stops him. "Who's in charge of this mission, anyway?" he challenges. "We make reports when *I* say!"

Since they are still unable to establish radio contact with the American base, the

U.N.M.O.B. survivors are uncertain that they will reach the base alive. But with no reason to stay at the decimated U.N. base and with Eiji to distract the Gurados units, they board their ATVs and depart. Eiji is left behind as the only remaining target.

When Rei tells Eiji the Layzner is running low on power, Eiji directs the Layzner to the sublevels of the devastated base and begins to devise a plan. "I've got to make them think people are still here," Eiji ponders.

"It seems cruel to just leave him back there," sighs Arthur. "We should have at least said something to him."

"I can't believe I'm hearing this!" David bellows, outraged. "Don't tell me you actually believe his ridiculous story?!"

"He's been right about everything else so far," Simone reminds him. David turns away, disgusted.

Back at the base Eiji discovers the base subgenerators are still active. When Rei informs him of the three approaching SPTs, Eiji sets some of the base's machinery into motion and waits.

As the three SPTs descend, the Bullgrenn's sensors detect sounds of the machinery in motion below the surface. "We're gonna cook 'em slow!" Gosterro laughs as the three shower the base with shots.

After thirty seconds of concentrated fire with no sign of resistance, his patience wears thin. "Cease fire!" he commands Gasten and Roberiah. "Hold your positions and don't move until I tell you!"

The Bullgrenn takes off, strafing a path to the sound emissions. As Gosterro's shots penetrate the lower levels, destroying the diversionary device, Eiji gasps in surprise. Having set his audio sensors to filter out other sounds, Gosterro actually hears Eiji's startled response and, approximating the location, fires into the Layzner's hiding place.

Eiji responds by breaking through to the surface, firing at Gosterro and quickly diving underground again. Gosterro orders Gasten into the complex to flush Eiji out into the open.

Eiji racks the Layzner's rifle on its backpack mount and prepares for a hand-to-hand confrontation. Rei tells him he only has enough power for ten seconds of knuckle-shot usage.

As Gasten stalks his prey, reporting to Gosterro that he sees no signs of the Earthlings, Eiji ambushes him. The Layzner's knuckle-shot slams into the Braver, disrupting all motor functions.

After prying the cockpit hatch open Eiji checks to see if Gasten is injured. Disarming Gasten and forcing him to reveal his radio frequency, Eiji calls to Gosterro, "I've taken him hostage. If you want him, come out of your SPT and get him!"

His demands are answered with laughter. "Well, it seems you're the only one left," jeers Gosterro.

Growing desperate, Eiji threatens to kill Gasten in five minute if his demands aren't met. Gosterro responds, "No, I'll give *you* five minutes to turn over the Layzner and then maybe I'll spare your life."

Deciding negotiation is useless, Eiji rushes to make connections to siphon the Braver's power into the Layzner's depleted reserves.

"He's cornered and scared," Roberiah warns Gosterro. "He might really kill him."

"Shut up!" yells Gosterro. "Don't question my orders!" Roberiah starts to protest but is ordered to search for the escaped Earth survivors. "They couldn't have gone far. If you find them, kill them all!"

Once again using Gasten as a hostage, Eiji demands that Gosterro call Roberiah back. "Two minutes left!"

Gosterro cackles, a barrage from his rifle shaking the ground. Gasten begins to plead with Gosterro as his computer informs him that his Braver's power level is insufficient to rendezvous with the tripod carrier. Sweat runs down his face as Gosterro tauntingly counts down the final fifteen seconds and Gasten prepares to die. But Eiji is no killer.

As Eiji tosses down his sidearm in disgust, a greatly relieved but perplexed Gasten asks, "Why didn't you kill me? An Earthman surely would have."

"I'm a hybrid," Eiji responds. "My mother is pure Gurados just like you."

Rei tells him that the Layzner is at full power and Eiji prepares to launch. Gosterro fires a missile in their general direction, the explosion shaking the whole complex and showering the two SPTs with debris. "Gosterro would have killed me as well!" Gasten curses as Eiji flies off to fight.

The Layzner and Bullgrenn duel, Gosterro chiding Eiji for not killing his enemies when given the chance. As they dogfight, Rei continues to target the Bullgrenn's head for possible shots despite Eiji's commands for other locations.

Every time Eiji hesitates to shoot, Gosterro presses the advantage. Finally,

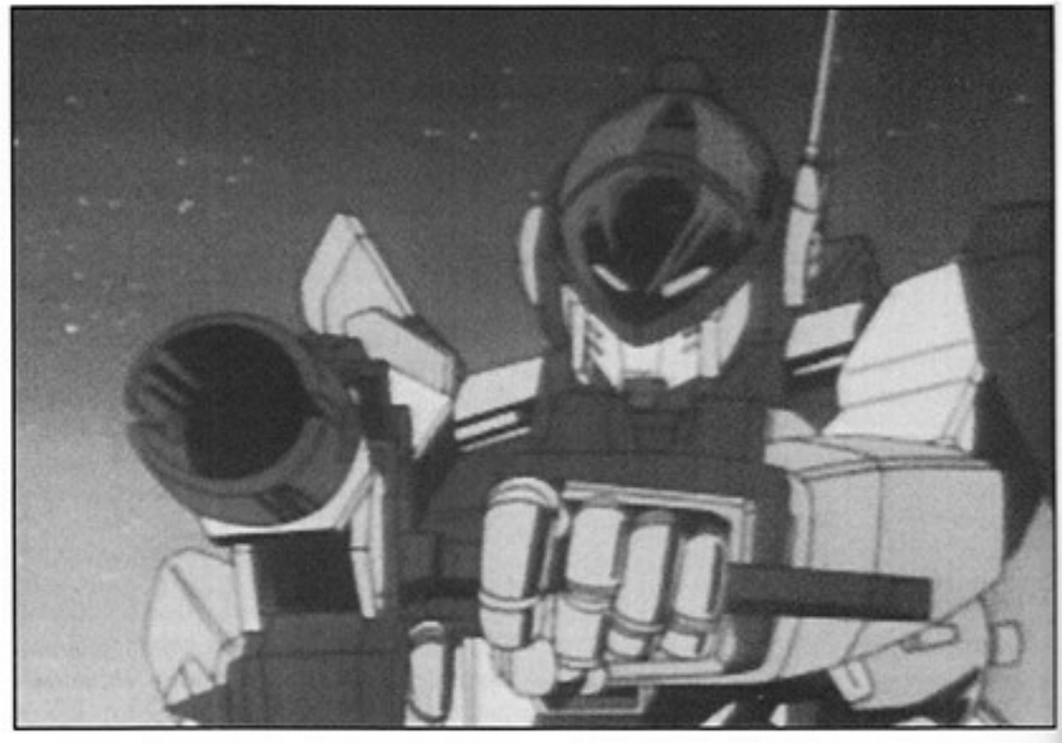
use his intelligence for personal gain; he keeps a respectful, reserved distance from the others and expects them to do the same. He is a born survivor.

Doctor Elizabeth Clabery
Twenty-four-year-old Elizabeth, instructor of the Cosmic Culture Club at the United Nations Mars Observation Base (U.N.M.O.B.) gained experience in both piloting and medicine while working for the United Nations Space Division. Elizabeth, the only adult to survive the continual Guradian attacks, serves as a mentor to her young charges.

Bill Conners
May Gilbert
Bob Nicolaiev
Francoise Libre
John Glenn
Staff members of the United Nations Mars Observation Base and initial survivors of the alien attack.

Ahmos Gale
Eiji's friend and future brother-in-law, 25-year-old Gale is forced to put aside his personal feelings for Eiji (and his sister Julia) when he is ordered to capture the renegade boy.

Gosterro
Sadistic and psychopathic, Gosterro wants to destroy Eiji and the Layzner at any cost. Not only does Eiji mar Gosterro's piloting record, but Julia, Eiji's sister, refused him for another man. Savagely intelligent, Gosterro is usually able to compensate for his impulsive actions. As far as he's concerned, the ends justify the means—he doesn't care who his targets are; he just wants to kill something.



Gosterro moves in for the kill—but before he can land the final shot a blast strikes the Bullgrenn from behind, spoiling his aim. Regaining his balance, Gosterro turns to face his new assailant, Gasten.

"I'll kill you!" Gasten swears as his computer warns him of impending power failure.

"You dare turn your weapon against me?!" Gosterro booms.

Gasten urges Eiji to go after his Earth friends while he deals with Gosterro. As the Layzner takes off, Gasten fires off a burst of covering shots to keep Gosterro from following. But the Braver's power reserves are drained, and its electromagnetically hardened armor fails against Gosterro's barrage of fire. Gasten and his Braver are riddled with laser shot. "He must have lost his mind," Gosterro gasps, wondering how he can explain his murder of a comrade.

As Roberiah finally locates the fleeing survivors, they spot him as well. The Layzner nowhere in sight, Anna fears that Eiji has been killed. If he has fallen prey to the Gurados soldiers, what chance could they possibly have?

Episode Five
Even Though We're Protected...

With Roberiah in pursuit, the survivors in the two ATVs desperately try to elude him. Bob, May, Nicolaiev and Françoise's attempt to draw Roberiah away from the children is defeated after a short chase. As Roberiah prepares to annihilate the ATV and its occupants, a shot from behind blasts his Braver to the ground, allowing the fleeing survivors to escape..

Having rescued the survivors, Eiji tries to drive Roberiah away. Gosterro's arrival forces Eiji to fight a running battle; as the two SPTs chase him through the natural labyrinths he manages to divert them from the hapless humans below.

Eiji fires the Layzner's missiles at the canyon walls, causing an avalanche to bar Gosterro and Roberiah's path. They try to track him, but their sensors are useless against the combined effects of the dust from the rock slide, the continuing windstorm, and Eiji's cleverly discharged ECM cartridge.

Having abandoned his pursuers, Eiji returns and follows the two ATVs to an abandoned American observation base, which everyone believes will be a safe place to hide until the storm lets up. As the survivors search for food, Eiji stands guard and Rei scans the area for possible signs of his two pursuers. Eiji refuses to believe they would give up so easily.

As the Bullgrenn and the Braver search for their prey, Roberiah inquires about Gasten. Gosterro lies and says that Eiji killed him, goading Roberiah into swearing vengeance against Eiji. Eiji's death will remove the only witness to Gosterro's treachery.

The U.N. staff members eventually give up trying to contact the American base, wondering if the interference jamming the airwaves is due to an American-Soviet war.

and if Eiji's story about aliens is true. Meanwhile, the students locate the food rations and set about dividing them evenly, one pile for each survivor.

"What about him?" Simone asks, referring to Eiji. Roanne and Anna agree that Eiji should be included in the allotment of rations, but before Arthur can begin dividing the food David snatches up a pile of the rations and marches from the room toward the cave entrance.

As the students watch from a distance, Eiji notices David approaching the Layzner and disembarks to meet him at ground level. David advances with a food package in his extended hand, but lets it fall to the ground before Eiji can take it. Eiji stares as David holds out two more packages and drops them. Eiji's expression turns from confusion to sadness.

"I'm not going to hand you anything," David says, tearing open a package and dumping its contents on the cavern floor. "How many dozens have died because of you?" David crumples the wrapper and throws it in Eiji's face. "Why don't you say something? Why don't you try to shut me up? C'mon, take your best shot!"

Hurt, Eiji turns and looks away. Enraged, David tackles him. As David pummels Eiji unmercifully, Anna asks Arthur and Roanne to stop him but they are too shocked to act.

"You should be dead!" David rants, striking Eiji to the ground. Anna begs him to stop but he is oblivious to everything but his own rage. The adults finally arrive and stop David's assault before any permanent damage is done. David, breaking free from Bob and storming off, points to Eiji and shouts, "I don't want your protection!"

Eiji straightens himself and walks back toward the Layzner. Elizabeth asks if he's all right; he responds with a weak nod. Nothing left to say, most of the spectators return to the inside of the base. Anna remains, staring at Eiji as she reaches for one of the fallen food packets. Hestitating, she notices that

Simone has already gathered the other two containers and is trying to collect the contents of the packages David ripped open. Unsure, Anna turns and walks back to the base.

"Do people fight where you come from?" Simone asks as she approaches Eiji. Despite his puzzled stare, she rushes forward and pushes the food into his hands. "I feel sorry for David," she says, backing away. "You acted too cool for him."

The next morning, the storm having passed, the group prepares to leave. None realize that Gosterro has discovered their hiding place and has targeted them as they prepare to depart.

Gosterro, lowering the power on his rifle to anti-personnel level, places a shot that grazes May's helmet. Unaware of the danger, she tells Bill that she saw a flash of light but is not sure what it was. The burn on her helmet tells Bill that something is very wrong, but he chooses not to alarm everyone.

Rei informs Eiji of other heat emissions in the area but can't pinpoint them. As Eiji flies over the small convoy, trying to anticipate Gosterro's next move, a blast shoots out the front tire of Nicolaiev's ATV. The vehicle careens into a canyon wall as a second shot punches through the front windshield, killing May. Eiji searches desperately for Gosterro as another shot takes Bob. Realizing the ATV is no protection, Nicolaiev and Françoise rush outside only to have Nicolaiev cut down.

Eiji finally locates the Bullgrenn and challenges it. But when Gosterro orders Roberiah to destroy the other ATV, Roberiah proetests—he knows the children helping Françoise into the remaining ATV are unarmed.

Bill pushes the ATV to its maximum speed, hoping to reach the American base just over the next hill. As the three SPTs battle above, the ATV reaches the peak of the hill, and the survivors rejoice at seeing the American military base, thinking that Eiji is wrong and that there is no war. But their celebration is cut short when the base's primary missile silos open.

Bewildered, they watch as the warheads launch and turrets begin to fill the sky with anti-missile fire. A few massive explosions flare in the upper atmosphere scant seconds before two incoming tactical nuclear warheads strike the base. Terrified, disbelieving, the survivors can only stare at the mushroom cloud and wonder about their own futures. ■

Gresco
Leader of the Guradian 14th Battalion assigned to occupy Earth.

Zuhl
Gresco's right hand man.

Gasten
Roberiah
Gosterro's wingmen

CRUSHER

No Job Too Dangerous When i

BY DANA KURTIN

When Haruka Takachiho wrote the first *Crusher Joe* novel in 1977, no one knew that it would be the inspiration for over seven more novels, an overwhelmingly popular animated film, and two OAVs.

R JOE

ne Price is Right

That first novel, *Danger at Solidarity Planet Pizan*, introduced what would prove to be some of Takachiho's most popular characters: Crusher Joe, the irreverent, headstrong leader of his "Crushers" team; the bulky cyborg Talos; the petite princess Alfin; feisty young Ricky and the obnoxious robot Dongo. Caught in a galaxy full of double-dealing, high-technology espionage, theft and war, the Crushers have unionized to become top demolitionists-for-hire. Independent of the Federation Space Force, the Crushers will perform, for a fee, any highly dangerous job.

According to Takachiho, the Crusher organization formed after warp technology was developed in 2111. Once people began emigrating to nearby stars such as Alpha Centauri, planets had to be terraformed to support human life. Suddenly, warp and terraforming physics became big business. The Crushers sprang up as individual groups who filled the demand for the demolition of asteroid and space debris.

Crusher Dan singlehandedly unionized the Crushers into organized groups for hire. His own team consisted of himself and three young men, Talos, Gambino, and Bird, with their robot Dongo. Joe, a Crusher since the age of ten, later replaces his retiring father as leader of the Crushers with Talos, Dongo and Gambino as willing members of his new team. By adventure and mishap Alfin and Ricky are added to the crew after Gambino is killed, and the team's reputation as the most competent Crushers of the union soon spreads throughout the galaxy.

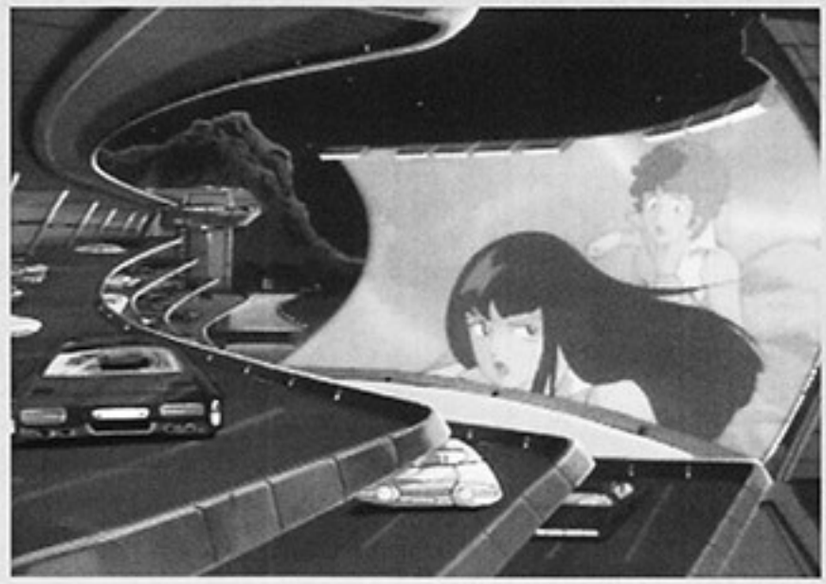
Despite the rough-and-ready nature of the Crushers' work, Takachiho explains, they subscribe to a few steadfast rules. Unethical and illegal assignments are taboo, and any Crusher accepting one is barred from the union. This presents a problem for clients who need a fall guy to perform their dirty deeds, and many of the Crushers' patrons are more than willing to trick or cheat the Crushers into accepting a questionable or misleading assignment. They know that once the union accepts a case, the Crushers are honor-bound to follow it through.

Further compounding the problem is the Federation Space Force, which regards the Crushers as pesky upstarts. While the two organizations have an antagonistic relationship, the Space Force has been known to intercede in the Crushers' behalf—much to the Crushers' resentment, of course.

The adventures of Crusher Joe and his colorful team of adventurers-for-hire struck a

Crusher Joe and the Dirty Pair: A Family Affair?

Most fans view the wild antics of the Dirty Pair long before they ever see the film that sparked the destructive duo's animated career. Although the Pair's physical appearance is slightly altered, fans of the later series will recognize them in a short scene in a drive-in movie theater in *Crusher Joe*. The Pair, heroines in an action-adventure flick, demolish their antagonists with ease while the more "realistic" Crushers gape at their unlikely contortions.



But the appearance of the Dirty Pair in the Crusher Joe movie wasn't just a happy accident. Both Crusher Joe and the Pair were the creations of the same mind, Haruka Takachiho. Just as Crusher Joe began as a series of novels, the Pair first appeared in print as well: they were first created for a series of stories that ran in the Japanese periodical *SF Magazine* before becoming a novel series of their own.

Sunrise, the same company that elected to animate Crusher Joe, decided to animate the Dirty Pair only a year after releasing *Crusher Joe* in 1983. The Pair proved a great success in their own television series, and a Dirty Pair movie, *Project Eden*, and a five-volume OAV series soon followed.

The fact that Crusher Joe and the Dirty Pair were created by the same author and animated by the same company, along with the appearance of the Pair in the Crusher Joe movie, led to the rumor among American fans that Crusher Joe was actually Yuri's son and that Talos, Joe's partner, was married to Kei.

These rumors were seemingly given weight by the fact that the *Crusher Joe Encyclopedia*, published in 1983 by Keibunsha, says that Crusher Dan married a woman named Yuria who died giving birth to Joe, and mentions Talos in connection with a woman named Kei.

But upon examining the information and dates given, it seems impossible that Yuri could be Joe's mother. The *Encyclopedia* states that Yuria was 23 when Joe was born in 2142. Subtract 23 from 2142, and you get the year 2119. Since Yuri of the Dirty Pair was born in 2122, Yuria and Yuri cannot be the same person. And since Yuria is supposed to be dead, it could be awkward to have her roaming the galaxy with the WWWA.

As to the relationship between Talos and Kei, the *Encyclopedia* does state that Bird and Talos both courted a woman named Kei. But Bird, not Talos, is the one who eventually marries her. Whether or not this is the Kei of the Dirty Pair is unspecified, but it seems unlikely.

However, the similarity of the names in Crusher Joe and the Dirty Pair seems calculated to cause speculation. One possibility for the confusion is that Japanese animators, manga artists and writers have a tendency to endlessly recycle pet character names and designs. Another, less likely possibility, is that Takachiho meant to stir up just this sort of curiosity about the "secret" life of his characters. Whatever the reason, it seems that the only family connections between Crusher Joe and the Dirty Pair are the man who created them and the studio that put them into motion. ■

chord in Japanese science fiction fandom and readers clamored for more. Sunrise (then Nippon Sunrise), acquired the film rights and finally released the *Crusher Joe* film in 1983.

Called simply *Crusher Joe*, the movie was a notable success. Some of its popularity can be attributed to the prominent role played by Yoshikazu Yasuhiko (*Arion, Venus Wars*) in forming the film. Serving triply as director, art director and character designer, Yasuhiko was mainly responsible for the action-packed pace and distinctive Yasuhiko "look" of the finished product.

Mechanical designer Shoji Kawamori (*Macross, Dangaio*) also contributed to the overall feel of the film, creating designs for the Crushers' ship, the *Minerva*, as well as the backup planes Fighter 1 and 2 and the team's tank, the *Gallion*.

Despite the popularity of *Crusher Joe*, many fans are most familiar with two very minor characters rather than with the Crusher legend itself. Those two are Kei and Yuri, the infamous Dirty Pair, who make their first animated appearance in a drive-in movie in the *Crusher Joe* film. Originally intended to be a simple humorous interlude, the animated Pair rocketed to popularity with their own television series and ultimately wound up starring in far more animated scenarios than their parent creation (*see sidebar*).

In 1989, six years after the original movie's release date, Sunrise revived the Crusher Joe legend in two new OAVs: *Ice Hell Trap*, released February 5, 1989, and *Final Weapon Ash*, released exactly six months later.

Both OAVs come from the same creative team: director Toshifumi Takizawa and screenwriter Kazushi Itsutake. Takachiho, Joe's original creator, assisted with the dialogue. Character designs were slightly altered to reflect the passage of time between the movie and the OAVs (most notably on Alfin), but the mecha designs and the colorful history of the Crusher organization remain intact.

Like the movie, the OAVs have enjoyed a notable success, especially *Final Weapon Ash*. Although no plans for further entries in the Crusher Joe saga have been announced, the popularity of the characters and situations make further sequels a distinct possibility.

Crusher Joe: The Movie

Joe and his team are hired to escort a very ill "princess" entombed in a glass case to the planet Scolan, where she can receive proper medical attention. When Joe accepts the mission without his father's approval and loses the young woman in a mysterious warp to boot, he and his team are placed on probation.

With information gained from Lt. Bird, Joe defies his father and travels with his team to Lagor, the criminal planet where the notorious crook "Big Murphy" tries unsuccessfully to wake the sleeping girl. The planet's president tells the team that he wants to call in the Federation Space Force but Big Murphy is threatening to blow up the planet if a single Space Force vessel appears.

Joe and Alfin rescue the semi-conscious young woman but must leave Talos and Ricky behind in Big Murphy's lair. The girl, not really a princess but a scientist's daughter named Johanna Mature, tells them that she had assisted her father in building a new warp device that can be aimed at other ships and transfer them through space. Big Murphy and his pirate cronies have the device, but only Johanna knows how to complete it.

Joe, Alfin, and Johanna are captured when they reenter the pirate base, but the team quickly frees themselves as the pirates torture Johanna. Finally she agrees to help Big Murphy complete the external warp device.

The team contacts Dongo in the *Minerva* as they split up within the bowels of the pirate base. Luckily, the Crushers are safely in the basement when the unexpectedly strong missiles the president of Lagor supplied the *Minerva* demolish Big Murphy's hideaway. Big Murphy, along with his cronies and Johanna, blasts into deep space in a ship hidden within the base with the Crusher team in hot pursuit.

With Murphy in flight Lagor's president hails the Federation Space Force, which intercedes in the growing firefight between the Crushers and Murphy. Defiantly, Big Murphy orders his men to use the external warp despite Johanna's protests that it isn't fully complete. The Federation ship, warped too closely to the planet's surface, violently explodes.

One of Murphy's henchmen, Loki (who is secretly working for the planet's president), shoots Murphy as Johanna runs to the warp's mechanical center in a desperate attempt to shut it off. The machine has overloaded and is dragging the moon down onto the planet. Unless the machine can be turned off Lagor is doomed.

Crusher Joe calls on Captain Kowolski of the Federation Space Force for help in rescuing Johanna. With his aid, the team takes the *Gallion* onto Murphy's ship and tracks Johanna to the ship's core. Loki tries frantically to shoot the determined Johanna as she climbs the enormous warp engine to the emergency shutoff switch. Joe arrives just in time to help Johanna pull the lever, and she slumps into his arms, dead.

The Federation Space Force enters the vessel and a terrified Loki explains that it was Mardola, the planet's president, who planned the entire fiasco. Mardola had offered Loki the position of head pirate when Big Murphy was dead.

Joe confronts Mardola, who admits the whole story. As the Federation hauls Mardola away, Joe rewards Lt. Bird for his help with a punch in the mouth. Bird, an ex-Crusher and his father's old partner, had been sent by his father to keep watch over him—and Joe doesn't like it.

Finally on vacation, Joe recovers from his grudge and, with Alfin, blasts into the blue sky and into his full role as head of the Crusher Joe team.

The Ice Hell Trap (OAV)

On the planet Ohro, in the republic of Killius, discontented citizens protest against Ghellston, the region's "president" and dictator. In the sky above, monitoring robots force political prisoners to mine ice inside the prison asteroid Devli.

Suddenly a laser tears through space and crashes against the ice asteroid prison. As the asteroid begins to break apart, the terrified prisoners are told to "keep working!"

The Crusher Joe team is happily enjoying a vacation in the tropics when a news broadcast informs them of the situation on Ohlo. It seems that a solar power station went berserk, hitting the ice prison and spinning it out of orbit. The Federal Space Force has been called in to try and stop the asteroid from colliding with the planet's surface.

Joe

The headstrong leader of his Crusher team, Joe became a Crusher at the age of ten and replaced his father as active head of the Crushers only a few years later. Born in 2142 on November 8, Joe is now 19 years old and maintains his exclusive 'A' rating. Joe has an intense dislike of authority (other than his own) and refuses to take orders from anyone, including his father. But he also has a lighter side, which enables him to take the balance of a situation and act quickly and calmly.

Ricky

Born in 2146 on the planet Lotus, Ricky is 15 years old and the ship's engineer. Orphaned when gang members killed his parents, Ricky escapes by stowing away on the *Minerva*. His sharp wits and instant reflexes soon establish him as a member of the team. Ricky has a quick temper and is easily goaded to blows. Talos is sometimes forced to restrain him, and Alfin and Ricky constantly bicker like brother and sister.

Alfin

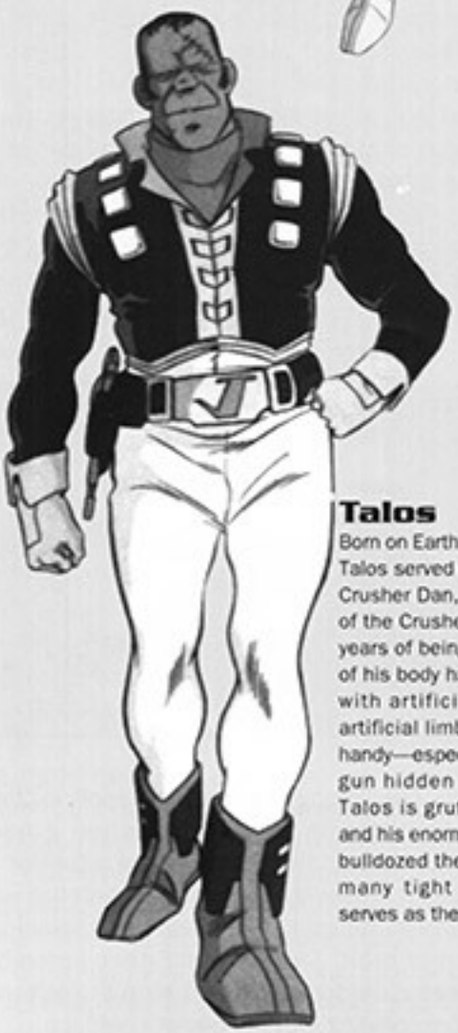
A princess who left her home planet of Pizan to join Joe's team of Crushers, Alfin was born in 2144 and is 17 years old. After the Pizan Incident, Alfin sneaks aboard the *Minerva* and takes the late Gambino's place as navigator. Perky, bubbly and easily intoxicated, Alfin is also quick-witted and fearless, although prone to occasional attacks of feminine modesty. While she and Ricky spar like siblings, Alfin and Joe have a relationship tinged with romance.

Lt. Bird

Once a Crusher with Dan, Bird joins the Federation Space Force. Bird has more than once intervened in a tight situation, but Joe likes him anyway.

Johanna Mature

The daughter of the scientist who invented the external warp machine, Johanna feels that her father's invention must be used for good and is willing to sacrifice her life to aid mankind.

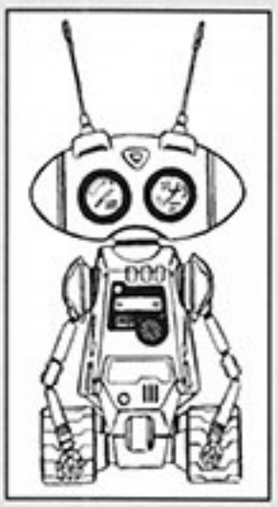


Talos

Born on Earth in the year 2109, Talos served with Joe's father, Crusher Dan, in the early days of the Crusher union. After 40 years of being a Crusher, 80% of his body has been replaced with artificial parts. These artificial limbs often come in handy—especially the machine gun hidden in his left arm. Talos is gruff and reserved, and his enormous strength has bulldozed the Crushers out of many tight situations. He serves as the *Minerva*'s pilot.

Dongo

With Talos, Dongo served with Crusher Dan in the early days of the union. Dongo has a warped sense of humor and always manages to say the least reassuring thing at the wrong time. Yet he is completely loyal to the Crusher team and is capable of operating the Minerva when the team is absent.



Crusher Dan

Joe's father Crusher Dan is not above using his son's dislike of authority to his own ends. First and foremost, Dan is a Crusher and his actions serve the union's needs.

Ghellston

Politicians don't get much dirtier than Ghellston, who not only entombs his political adversaries in an ice prison asteroid but has no scruples about sacrificing the Crushers as well.

Hume

Ghellston's devoted minion.

Mardo

Obsessed with winning an unwinnable war, Mardo will go to any lengths and betray anyone to gain the weapon that will make victory possible: Final Weapon Ash.

Lt. Tanya

Staunchly defending the military code and the laws of her planet, Tanya is stubbornly devoted to destroying project Ash—even if she has to step on Joe's toes to do it.

Big Murphy

Craving power, this pirate goes a step too far when he crosses the president of his crime-riddled planet.

But the Crushers are closer than the Space Force, and Joe and his team are yanked from their vacation and sent to aid the ice-bound prisoners. As they wait for the Killians at the Sahara shuttle station, Talos shares his suspicions about their assignment. "These political prisoners are people the president wants dead anyway," he says. "Why would Ghellston want to save them?"

Once on the Killian shuttle the team is greeted by the president's second-in-command, Hume. Hume is icily condescending and questions the team's ability in light of their youth, finally admitting that the main reason for the rescue attempt is to prove to the public that Ghellston has the best interests of his country at heart.

Inside the ice asteroid, frozen bodies are heaped outside the airlocks that protect a few surviving prisoners. As the trapped men wonder about survival, workers call off their rescue attempt and await the Crushers' arrival.

Once at Killius, Hume is all smiles as he officially greets the Crushers in front of the cameras. The team learns that they have only 40 hours to save the prisoners and keep the asteroid from hitting the planet.

Joe tells Hume to keep the Killian military out of his way until he calls for them. Once inside the *Minerva*, the team surveys the situation and finally decides to duplicate what they did on Nestro: attach small engines to the asteroid to push it into position.

Dongo quickly calculates the proper number and position of engines, and Joe

tells Hume they will need 104 small rocket-class ships. Hume wants to know if the Crushers will be able to rescue the prisoners, but Joe tells him that's not his job. Once the asteroid is safe, the Killians can dig the prisoners out themselves.

Three hours tick away as the Crusher Joe team waits for the ships to arrive. As spacecraft fill the sky, the team shows them where to attach to the asteroid's surface. A news crew begins an enthusiastic overview of the process.

But something goes wrong. As Joe and Dongo lower themselves onto the asteroid's surface in the team's tank, the *Gallion*, one of the small ships explodes. Without one of the crucial engines, the entire attempt will fail.

Joe's appeal to Hume for aid in evacuation is met with a cold denial as Hume reveals Ghellston's double-cross. "The only thing we needed from you was proof that we were trying to help the prisoners. We expected you to try and fail all along."

The news crew reports the Crushers' failure as more prisoners are killed in the dissolving ice prison. The search for Joe is called off as Hume recalls the remaining team back to the mothership, where they are taken captive at gunpoint.

Joe and Dongo hide themselves and the *Gallion* within the asteroid to escape detection. With only 3,600 seconds until the total destruction of the prison, Dongo uncovers an iced-over passage trapping a few surviving prisoners in an oxygenated hollow. But the prisoners' hopes of survival are dashed when Joe tells them that he has been betrayed and is himself hiding from the Killian forces.

The prisoners suggest escaping in the *Gallion*. "It'd just be a big metal coffin," Joe says. But the mention of a coffin sparks an idea. The *Gallion*'s laser slowly cuts part of the asteroid into a separate shuttle, or "ice coffin," in which they can all escape. The remaining engines can be strapped to the chunk and push them away from the plummeting asteroid.

Ghellston and his staff laugh triumphantly as the Crusher Joe team is told to try to lift the asteroid with the *Minerva* and die trying. But the automatic weapon hidden in Talos' cyborg arm and Ricky's explosive buttons blast the team's way to the *Minerva* and freedom.

Joe's ice coffin breaks from the main asteroid just as the planet destroys the ice prison from below. But the Killians could still intercept the *Gallian's* beacon, and Joe sets up defensive positions on the coffin's surface.

As expected, the Killians arrive first, but the Crushers are hot on their trail and with their million-in-one sol particle bombs quickly dispense with most of the offensive forces. Ricky and Alfin, in Fighters 1 and 2, are trying to tow the ice coffin to safety when the Killian mothership attacks. The main gun is focused and ready to fire when a sudden burst of suppression fire stops the conflict. The Space Force has arrived just in time.

A frantic Hume screams for the mother ship to fire regardless—but only succeeds in pulverizing his own ship when the incensed Space Force fires in return.

The Space Force Captain seems unenthusiastic when he discovers that he has only rescued some Crushers. "If I'd known that the Killians were fighting Crushers," he comments, "I might have sided with them." But then he and Joe laugh, obviously at an old joke.

The rescued political prisoners, now heroes, decide to stay on Killius and fight until Ghellston is deposed. But since Ghellston was also once a hero, Joe reflects that these prisoners will probably become the new dictators.

"That's too deep for me," Talos grunts as the *Minerva* leaps into warp.

Final Weapon Ash (OAV)

On a ship in a decaying orbit above the planet Dabidoff, a uniformed young woman fires at encroaching soldiers. "Rebellion is treason against the state!" she cries as she defends the suitcase chained to her wrist.

Across the galaxy, the president of the war-torn planet of Bandore injects himself with toxin in an intricate attempt to contact the Crushers. As his aides plot, the disguised Crusher Joe team wheels the president into an ambulance. The revived president asks for a drink of water.

"We don't have any water, but we do have an estrogen drink," Joe replies.

The password completed, the president tells them that the *Suhaud*, the ship carrying Lt. Tanya and final weapon Ash, has crashed on the planet Dabidoff. Now that peace with Bandore's rival planet Carminas is possible, Ash must be destroyed. But military factions disagree with the truce and Ash must not fall into their hands.

Once aboard the *Minerva*, the Crusher Joe team reviews their information. Final weapon Ash is just that: it reduces everything to ash...on a planetary scale. But the planet Dabidoff is almost as bad. Although most of

the crucial information has been erased, the Bandorian military used the planet to research and develop small, murderous machines called "croakers."

An attack by Bandorian forces as the *Minerva* enters Dabidoff air space comes as a complete surprise. Captain Mardo of the Bandore Space Force orders the team to leave the sector and the situation quickly escalates into a firefight. The smaller *Minerva* destroys the battleship's control systems, but both ships are damaged and sent plowing into the planet's surface.

A desperate race to find the *Suhaud* is launched by both parties. Mardo's second-in-command is surprised to learn that the main threat is not Crushers, but croakers. Left to themselves during the war with Carminas, the machines have actually improved on themselves. Mardo's troops soon learn how deadly the croakers are—they're all jaws, and once they bite, they explode.

Joe and Talos man Fighters 1 and 2 as Alfin and Ricky take the *Gallion*, dodging croakers. But a minor run-on with a single croaker brings thousands of the venomous balls converging on the *Gallion*. As Talos fends them off, Dongo cheerfully tells them that the croakers cannot be killed by electric fields. "Next to me," he says, "they're like toys!"

These "toys" have swarmed by the millions over the fallen *Suhaud*. Setting up a smokescreen, Joe passes through them and into the spaceship, following a transmitter to Lt. Tanya's location. She has been taken hostage by the two remaining soldiers, one of whom battles his way outside to see if Mardo's troops have arrived to rescue them. But Mardo, coldly desperate, has ordered his men to drop a plasma bomb on his own troops to kill the majority of the croakers and a single mobile croaker "factory." Of all his weaponry, only three helicopters are left.

Offering herself as a decoy, Alfin leads the croakers astray while Talos and Ricky fly

off after Joe. Outside the *Suhaud*, one of the soldiers discovers Joe's plane as Joe shoots his comrade.

Lt. Tanya almost mistakes Joe for another traitor but relaxes when he offers her an estrogen drink—the password. Over Joe's protests she insists that he is now under her command; since she is the only one who can dismantle Ash, he must obey her.

Their repartee is broken as the remaining traitorous soldier fires, alerting the croakers. As the traitor hides from view, Joe and Tanya battle their way to safety, Tanya painfully twisting her ankle in the ship's wreckage.

Clouds of croakers, alerted by the explosions from within the ship, stop following Alfin's decoy and dive into the *Suhaud*. Joe and Tanya meet Talos and Ricky as well as hundreds of the deadly orbs as they dash through the ship, the traitor silently following them on their way to Fighter 1. While Talos and Joe are preoccupied with fending off croakers, the soldier hijacks Tanya as explosions outside finally distract the hungry balls.

As he drags Tanya into a helicopter to meet Mardo, the soldier tries to convince her that joining them and giving up Ash is the best way to achieve peace with Carminas. But Mardo shoots the soldier on sight, telling Tanya that he is obeying orders from the president and that she is now under his command. Yet he doesn't recognize the password....

As Joe, Talos and Ricky disembowel a croaker "factory," Tanya opens Ash's case with a retina-scan and threateningly clicks off the first lock. After Mardo's startled protestations subside, he confesses that he cannot let the deaths in the Bandore-Carminas war go unavenged. "If you give us Ash," he says, unknowingly recorded by a gadget in Tanya's watch, "we will win this war!"

Tanya aims Ash at him and clicks off the second safety. "If you don't tell me who's behind this plot," she says, "I'll activate Ash." When this fails to work, she takes off the final safety catch. "Now all I have to do is press a button."

"Calloway!" howls Mardo, naming the supreme commander of the Bandore Space Fleet. "It's Calloway!"

Joe, Ricky and Talos burst into the room and Mardo flings himself at Tanya, throwing Ash onto the floor. The "dead" soldier painfully picks it up and presses the button.

"We're all going to die now," he says, and dies.

Talos grabs Tanya, who violently protests as the team flees through the ship. Finally Joe simply knocks her out. "Sorry," he pants, "but if you die it's breach of contract."

As croakers converge on the team Dongo intervenes in the *Minerva* just in time. "Alfin," Joe shouts into the receiver, "you have fifteen minutes to get here or we all die!" Alfin steps on the gas and plows the *Gallion* into the *Minerva*'s hold with a few minutes to spare.

Mardo, his arm blown off by a croaker, is dragged into the copter by the one remaining crewmember, whom he abandons to his death. But before Mardo can condemn the *Minerva* to his own gruesome fate croakers attach to his chopper blades and drag him down.

The *Minerva* begins the climb to safety just as Ash completes its countdown. As Ash's circle spreads, life is drained away from the surface. The still-living Mardo is flayed into dust as Ash expands over the planet, into space, reaches for the *Minerva*—and misses.

Ricky is ecstatic to find himself still alive. "Unless this is hell," Dongo retorts, pinching him.

Joe watches the reviving Tanya rub the spot where he hit her. "Doesn't look like hell to me," he smiles as he guides the *Minerva* into space. ■

MONGO'S MANGA

Maison Ikkoku

BY JEFF OKAMOTO

Rumiko Takahashi, creator of *Maison Ikkoku*, is known by fans across America for slapstick hits *Urusei Yatsura* and *Ranma 1/2*. Like these other creations, *Maison Ikkoku* features Takahashi's outrageous sense of humor.But unlike her other *manga*, which relies on a sexy young alien or shape-shifting martial artists to provide the mayhem, *Maison Ikkoku* pokes fun at the conventions of everyday behavior by exploring the ridiculous foibles of romance in a small boarding house called Ikkoku-kan.

Maison Ikkoku, like Takahashi's other works, started as a *manga* series and expanded into animation. The series showed early signs of success: its fifteen volumes of collected *manga* sold over 18 million copies. When *Urusei Yatsura* went off the air in 1986, the animated *Maison Ikkoku* took its time slot and ran for almost two years.

Interestingly, the show spawned not only two animated movies and an OAV, but a live-action movie which was released in 1986. The animated films, *Maison Ikkoku Kanketsuhen (Maison Ikkoku: the Final Story)* and *Maison Ikkoku: Through the Seasons*, were released after the television series ended in 1988. As a testament to the lasting popularity of the series, a *Maison Ikkoku* OAV, *Maison Ikkoku Side Story: Ikkoku Island*, was released in 1991.

Characters

"Maison Ikkoku" is an old-style boarding house called Ikkoku-kan. Built before World War II, Ikkoku-kan contains six eight-tatami rooms (about 144 square feet) and a ten-tatami manager's room (180 square feet). Since there are only two toilets and two communal sinks in the building, the inhabitants must go to the local baths to bathe.

Kyoko Otonashi

Gentle, formal Kyoko married Souichiro Otonashi, her high school geology teacher, right after graduation. After her husband's unfortunate death Kyoko decides she will not return home to her family but instead accepts the job of manager of Ikkoku-kan, a boarding house owned by her father-in-law. Kyoko is convinced that what she feels for Godai is nothing but a maternal affection. His endearing, bumbling efforts to gain her affection help her to finally rid herself of the belief that loving Godai means that she never really loved her first husband, Souichiro.

Yusaku Godai Room #5

A waffling, clumsy, indecisive young man prone to tripping over his own feet, Godai begins his life in Maison Ikkoku as a *ronin*—a student unable to pass the college entrance exams and enter a good college. Typically tongue-tied when it comes to telling Kyoko that he loves her, Godai's efforts to gain her heart usually end in disaster, especially when his neighbors butt in. Nevertheless, Godai is eternally optimistic and continually tries to improve himself so he can be worthy of Kyoko's love.

The story focuses on the budding (and always thwarted) relationship between Godai and the manager of his boarding house, a young widow named Kyoko. Unfortunately, Godai is completely unable to do something as

simple as tell the object of his affections that he loves her. Shortly after meeting the gentle, formal widow, he drunkenly tells the whole neighborhood about his crush on her, but, typically, he can't remember his confession the next day and can't muster the courage to tell Kyoko face to face until it's almost too late.

Godai's lovelorn situation is further convoluted by the wacky assortment of characters that feel they must meddle in Godai and Kyoko's affairs. The biggest troublemakers are the other tenants in the building, called the "Loony Squad" for their all-night parties and general craziness: Mrs. Ichinose, Yotsuya, and Akemi.

No matter what the situation, the loony squad causes no end of trouble between Godai and Kyoko. If they're not feeding Godai misleading information, causing him to panic into yet another horrible situation, they're in a drunken haze forgetting to tell Kyoko that Godai has left Ikkoku-kan to follow her on her travels. They party late into the night in Godai's room before his examinations, blackmail him into giving them food, interfere with his studies, and even hold a "There's always next year" party when the day-care teacher examination results are announced (since they assume that Godai has failed once again).

Yet both Mrs. Ichinose and Akemi do try to help the star-crossed lovers at times. Mrs. Ichinose often gives Godai scathing summaries of what he's done wrong this time, while Akemi wonders out loud (while Kyoko is listening, of course) if she should sleep with Godai to try and get Kyoko to return to Ikkoku-kan. Ichinose even tries to arrange an *omiai* (a meeting to see if a couple is compatible for marriage) for Kyoko.

Sex and all the misunderstandings it involves often trips up the relationship between Kyoko and Godai. The two always seem to be placed in compromising positions, which are then seen and misinterpreted by the other person. Twice, Kyoko sees Godai near an infamous "love motel" (where couples go to have sex), and is forced to believe the worst of him. And Godai, assuming that Kyoko is engaged to his rival, the debonair Mitaka, flees Ikkoku-kan in despair.

Further complicating the situation is Kyoko's parents, especially her mother. They loathe her decision not to return home after her husband's death and will stop at nothing to get her to reconsider. They have even resorted to moving all of Kyoko's possessions out of the building without her knowledge, leaving her to face an empty room.

Reduced to its barest essence, *Maison Ikkoku* is a soap opera, made especially enjoyable by the fact that the ever-changing characters are completely unpredictable. In every episode, the reader wonders if this time Godai will finally muster the courage to tell Kyoko that he loves her.

For American audiences, the soap opera gains another dimension in the stories that prominently feature Japanese culture. For example, when Kyoko portrays the ghost Okiku

at a summer festival, the entire gang ends up at the bottom of the well where Okiku is said to dwell. The hell of college entrance exams is minutely examined in Godai's attempt to finally enter college, and Mitaka's *omiai* provides a humorous example of arranged marriages.

As the reader might expect, the final story covers the wedding of Godai and Kyoko in grand detail. But the other characters have happy endings as well: Mitaka marries Asuna and they have twin girls, Mei and Moe (who unfortunately inherit their father's dental characteristics); another baby is one the way. Kozue and her husband live happily in Nagoya; Yagami ends up in college, pining for Godai; Nikaido becomes an unhappy salaryman who yearns to return to Ikkoku-kan; and the lingerie-clad Akemi marries the Master of Cha-Cha-Maru.

As for Kyoko and Godai, they return to Ikkoku-kan with their newborn daughter Haruka. Kyoko tells her daughter, "Haruka, we've come home. This is where your father and mother first met."

And, like all of Takahashi's warped but lovable creations, they all live happily ever after. ■

Hanae Ichinose
Room #1

A short, squat middle-aged lady, Mrs. Ichinose is a busybody who loves to party and to poke her nose into everyone else's business. Although she is somewhat contemptuous of Godai's inability to tell Kyoko he loves her, her meddlesome nature finally compels her to help the two of them connect. Matters of the heart are very simple to Mrs. Ichinose, since she essentially bulldozed her own husband into marriage.

Kentaro Ichinose

Constantly embarrassed by his mother's hijinks, Kentaro has a crush on Ikuko—but unfortunately, like everyone around him, he is completely unable to tell her that he likes her.

More Characters

Yotsuya Room #4

The mysterious resident of room #4, no one knows Yotsuya's first name, where his home town is, or what he does for a living. His hobby is peeping, with a little shoplifting thrown in for good measure. Godai's many attempts to seal the peephole between his room and Yotsuya's closet are completely useless.

Kozue Nanao

Kozue, who met Godai during one of his many part-time jobs, mistakenly assumes that Godai is interested in her and doggedly pursues their "relationship." While Godai does like Kozue as a friend, he doesn't have the heart to tell her that he doesn't love her--and this nearly destroys his budding love affair with Kyoko.

Mr. and Mrs. Chigusa

Kyoko's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chigusa are absolutely opposed to their daughter running Ikkoku-kan and will stop at nothing to get her to return home.

Shun Mitaka

A suave lady's man with sparkling teeth, Mitaka is a popular and successful tennis coach and Godai's rival for Kyoko's affection. Mitaka's only flaw is his rabid fear of dogs, which is a problem since Kyoko's dog Souichiro-san (named after her late husband) adores him.

Asuna Kujou

A very shy, proper lady from a rich family, Asuna is introduced to Mitaka at an *omiai* (an arranged meeting to see if a man and woman are compatible for marriage). While Asuna is immediately impressed by Mitaka, he is still in love with Kyoko. Mitaka's disinterest is fueled by the fact that Asuna has **lots** of dogs. Asuna senses that Mitaka is preoccupied by Kyoko and tries to get Kyoko to stop seeing him, but she can never quite tell Kyoko the reason why.

Ikuko Otonashi

Kyoko's niece by marriage, Ikuko insists that Godai tutor her so she can pass her high school examinations and get into the best high school and college.

Ibuki Yagami

A high school student, Ibuko meets Godai when he comes to her school as a teacher-trainee. Much as Kyoko fell in love with her teacher and first husband Souchiro, Ibuki develops a ferocious crush on Godai and will stop at nothing to make him notice her. Godai has no interest in Ibuki, but since her father is the chief of personnel at the Mitsutomo Corporation he is forced to endure her in order to get a favorable introduction to her father.

Nozomu Nikaido Room #2

Nikaido only rented a room in Maison Ikkoku because he, like so many others, has a vicious crush on Kyoko. Slow on the uptake and rather tactless, he is continually surprised by the antics of his neighbors.

Akemi Roppongi Room #6

A red-haired bombshell who habitually wears only her negligee, Akemi joins Mrs. Ichinose and Yotsuya in their all-night parties and Godai-baiting sessions. While not at home, she works as a hostess at the snack bar "Cha-Cha-Maru." Though she doesn't often show it, Akemi is quite concerned about Godai and Kyoko's relationship and often resorts to interesting threats to get them together.

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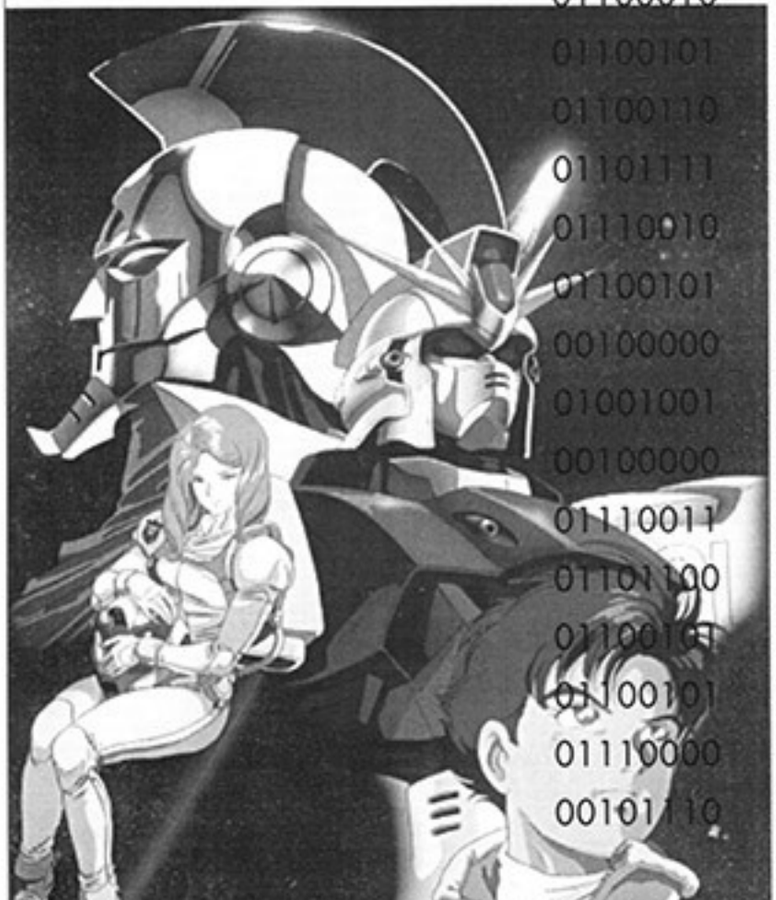

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BATSU & TERRY	$98.00
BATTLE ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL	$98.00
BAVE STOCK #1	$78.00
BE-BOY	$88.00
BEAST CITY (YUJU TOSHI)	$98.00
BI SHOT SOFT SPECIAL	$60.00
BIRTH	$68.00
BIRTH OF SPECTRE	$48.00
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BO-CHAN	$49.40
BODY JACK	$85.70
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BORGMAN—TV VOL 2	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 3	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 4	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 5	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 6	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 7	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 8	$78.00
BORGMAN—TV VOL 9	$78.00
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BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—2	$36.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—3	$36.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—4	$88.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—5	$98.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—6	$94.76
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—7	$94.70
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—8	$94.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—HURRICANE LIVE 2032	$49.00
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BURNING BLOOD 2	$78.00
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CITYHUNTER TV VOL 1	$78.00
CITYHUNTER TV VOL 2	$78.00
CITYHUNTER TV VOL 3	$78.00
CITYHUNTER TV VOL 4	$78.00
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 1	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 2	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 3	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 4	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 5	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 6	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 7	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 8	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 9	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 10	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 11	$48.41
CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 12	$48.41
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CITYHUNTER 2—VOL 15	$48.41
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CONAN THE FUTURE BOY 2	$58.00
CONAN THE FUTURE BOY 3	$58.00
CONAN THE FUTURE BOY 4	$58.00
CONAN THE FUTURE BOY 5	$58.00
CONAN THE FUTURE BOY 6	$58.00
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CREAM LEMON 2ND SERIES VOL 4	$98.00
CREAM LEMON 2ND SERIES VOL 5	$98.00
CREAM LEMON AMI SOREKAWA	$68.00
CREAM LEMON GRADUATION ALBUM	$98.00
CREAM LEMON SPECIAL—DARK	$78.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 1 & 2	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 3 & 4	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 5 & 6	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 7 & 8	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 9 & 10	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 11 & 12	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 13 & 14	$98.00
CREAM LEMON VOL 15 & 16	$98.00
CREAM LEMON • AMI IMAGE SPECIAL (2 DISCS)	$128.00
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GUYVER OVA 4 $46.35
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HEART COCKAIL VOL 4 $75.91
HEART COCKAIL VOL 5 $75.91
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KIZUOBITO—ACT 3 $98.00
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LEGEND OF KIKOUTEI YOROIDEN SAMURAI TROOPERS VOL 3 $39.00
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LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES OVA VOL 3 $100.94
LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES OVA VOL 4 $100.94
LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES OVA VOL 5 $100.94
LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES OVA VOL 6 $100.94
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LUPIN III TV (FIRST SERIES)—VOL 2 $98.00
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LUPIN III (2ND SERIES)—VOL 3 $95.38
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NEW CAPTAIN TSUBASA 4 $35.99
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ORANGE ROAD OVA #4 $49.44
ORANGE ROAD OVA HEART ON FIRE "BIRTH STAGE" $49.44
ORANGE ROAD OVA HEART ON FIRE "SPRING IDOL" $49.44
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 1 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 2 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 3 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 4 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 5 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 6 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 7 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 8 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 9 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 10 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 11 $78.00
ORANGE ROAD TV—VOL 12 $78.00
ORGUSS COMPLETE COLLECTION $597.40
ORGUSS MEMORIAL—VOL 1 $88.00
ORGUSS MEMORIAL—VOL 2 $88.00
OSHINBO PAPA $48.00
OTOKO GI $48.00
OUTLANDERS $68.00
P. PRO $48.00
PATARILLO! $75.91
PATLABOR—VOL 1 $48.00
PATLABOR—VOL 2 $48.00
PATLABOR—VOL 3 $48.00
PATLABOR—VOL 4 $48.00
PATLABOR—VOL 5 $48.00
PATLABOR—VOL 6 $48.00
PATLABOR—VOL 6 1/2 $30.00
PATLABOR—VOL 7 SPECIAL $46.35
PATLABOR MOVIE $98.00
PATLABOR OVA 1 (P-1) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 2 (P-2) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 3 (P-3) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 4 (P-4) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 5 (P-5) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 6 (P-6) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 7 (P-7) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA 8 (P-8) $78.00
PATLABOR OVA (P-9) $78.00
PENGUIN'S MEMORY $93.42
PREFECTURAL EARTH DEFENSE FORCE $80.00
PRINCE WHO CHASES SERPENTS $98.00
PROJECT AKO—FINAL $58.00
PROJECT AKO—PART 1 $78.00
PROJECT AKO—PART 2 $58.00
PROJECT AKO—PART 3 $58.00
PROJECT ZEORYMER—ACT 1 $98.00
PROJECT ZEORYMER—ACT 2 $98.00
PROJECT ZEORYMER—ACT 3 $98.00
PROJECT ZEORYMER—ACT 4 $94.70
PURPLE EYES IN THE DARK $68.00
QUEEN MILLENNIA $128.00
RANMA 1/2 $76.00
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR—VOL 1 $92.60
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR—VOL 2 $92.60

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR—VOL 3 $92.60
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR—VOL 4 $92.60
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR—VOL 5 $92.60
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR—VOL 6 $92.60
RG VEDA $60.00
RHEA GAL FORCE $58.00
RIDING BEAN $98.00
RIKI-OH $77.25
RIKI-OH 2 $60.00
ROBOT CARNIVAL $98.00
ROOTS SEARCH $75.91
RYOKUNOHARA LABYRINTH—"SPARKLING PHANTOM" $78.00
SAISHU KYOSHI (ULTIMATE TEACHER) $90.00
SALAMANDER (PART 1) $78.00
SALAMANDER—ADVANCED SAGA $75.19
SALAMANDER—BASIC SAGA $78.00
SAMURAI TROOPERS $39.00
SAMURAI, THE $78.00
SANCUS—POEM OF THE WIND & TREES $98.00
SCHOOL YARD SKETCHES (X RATED) $59.00
SD GUNDAM 3+4 $58.00
SD GUNDAM LEGEND SPECIAL 1 + 2 $58.00
SD GUNDAM Mk II $58.00
SD GUNDAM'S COUNERATTACK $46.35
SHISANSHIRO $49.44
SHONEN BAKUSUZOKU—1 $75.91
SHONEN BAKUSUZOKU—2 $75.91
SHONEN BAKUSUZOKU—3 $75.91
SHONEN BAKUSUZOKU—4 $75.91
SHONEN BAKUSUZOKU—5 $75.91
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 1 $39.14
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 2 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 3 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 4 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 5 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 6 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 7 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 8 $48.41
SHURATO HEAVEN WAR CHRONICLES VOL 9 $48.41
SHUTENDOJI $68.00
SHUTENDOJI 2 $68.00
SHUTENDOJI 3 $68.00
SILK ROAD O TOBUI (SONGOKU) $49.44
SLOW STEP—VOL 1 $58.00
SLOW STEP—VOL 2 $58.00
SLOW STEP—VOL 3 $58.00
SLOW STEP—VOL 4 $58.00
SLOW STEP—VOL 5 $58.00
SOKUMO SHINJIN $49.44
SOL BIANCA $61.80
SOL BIANCA 2 $60.00
SOUTHERN CROSS PERFECT COLLECTION $390.00
SPACE COBRA PERFECT COLLECTION $464.00
SPACE FAMILY CARLVINSON $75.91
SPT LAYZNER—ACT I $78.00
SPT LAYZNER—ACT II $78.00
SPT LAYZNER—ACT III $78.00
STARSHIP TROOPERS—VOL 1 $98.00
STARSHIP TROOPERS—VOL 2 $98.00
STARSHIP TROOPERS—VOL 3 $98.00
STEEL DEMON (HAGANE NO ONI) $98.00
STREET CORNER OF MERUHEN $66.13
SUPER DARIUS
SUPERGAL $58.00
TAKE THE X TRAIN $78.00
TALE OF GENJI $98.00
TATSUNOKO THEME COLLECTION $48.00
TECHNOPOLICE 21C $92.49
TEN LITTLE GALL FORCE $50.00
TENSHI NO TAMAGO (ANGEL'S EGG) $88.00
THUNDERBIRDS BOX SET $464.00
THUNDERBIRDS BOX SET 2 $450.59
TIME PATROL $48.41
TIME STRANGER $95.00
TOMORROW'S JOE BOX SET $590.00
TO-Y $96.00
TOKYO VICE $78.00
TOMORROW'S JOE (10 DISC BOX) $590.00
TOMORROW'S JOE (1980) $124.63
TOMORROW'S JOE 2 (1981) $95.38
TOUCH—1 $95.00
TOUCH—2 $95.00
TOUCH—3 $95.00
TRANSFORMERS THE MOVIE (1986) $60.00
TRITON OF THE SEA $412.00
TWO EXPRESS $68.00
TWILIGHT OF THE COCKROACHES $98.00
TWILIGHT Q—REFLECTION $88.00
TWILIGHT Q VOL 2 $88.00
TWINKLE HEART $78.00
TWINKLE NORA ROCK ME! $85.70
ULTRAMAN USA $75.73
URBAN SQUARE $98.00
UROTSUKIDOJI MOVIE $79.93
UROTSUKIDOJI—1 $88.00
UROTSUKIDOJI—2 $78.00
UROTSUKIDOJI—3 $78.00
UROTSUKIDOJI—PART 4 $78.00
UROTSUKIDOJI PART 5 $75.73
URUSEI YATSURA $103.00
URUSEI YATSURA '87—INABA KUN $98.00
URUSEI YATSURA—1: ONLY YOU $98.00
URUSEI YATSURA—1: ONLY YOU THEATRE RELEASE $98.00
URUSEI YATSURA—2: BEAUTIFUL DREAMER $95.00
URUSEI YATSURA—3: REMEMBER MY LOVE $98.00
URUSEI YATSURA—4: LUM THE FOREVER $98.00
URUSEI YATSURA—5: BOY MEETS GIRL $100.00
URUSEI YATSURA—I AM THE SYUCHAN $78.00
URUSEI YATSURA—PROMO CLIPS $68.00
URUSEI YATSURA—RYOKO'S SEP. TEA PARTY $78.00
URUSEI YATSURA—SYMPHONY $48.00
URUSEI YATSURA 4 (MAKING OF ...) $66.13
URUSEI YATSURA BOX COLLECTION $3500.00
URUSEI YATSURA KARAOKE MUSIC PARADE $58.00
URUSEI YATSURA MOVIE SET $500.00
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—CHANCE ON LOVE $48.00
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—DATE WITH A SPIRIT $56.00
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—ELECTRICALLY CHARGED GUARD $56.65
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—FEAR OF WEASELS $56.00
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—GET MADI SHERBET $58.00

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URUSEI YATSURA OVA—HOT OTSUKARE $56.65
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—HOWL AT THE MOON $56.65
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—LOVE ME MORE
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—NAGISA'S FIANCE $58.00
URUSEI YATSURA OVA—YAGI SAN O CHEESE $56.65
URUSEI YATSURA TV TITLES $48.00
URUSEI YATSURA TV VOL #1 $78.00
URUSEI YATSURA TV VOL #2 $78.00
URUSEI YATSURA TV VOL #3 $78.00
UTSUNOMIKO MOVIE $91.67
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #1 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #2 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #3 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #4 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #5 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #6 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #7 $48.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA #8 $48.00
VAMPIRE HUNTER "D" $49.00
VAMPIRE PRINCESS—MIYU: PART 1 $55.00
VAMPIRE PRINCESS—MIYU: PART 2 $55.00
VAMPIRE PRINCESS—MIYU: PART 3 $55.00
VAMPIRE PRINCESS—MIYU: PART 4 $55.00
VENUS WARS $59.74
VIDEO SINGLE: GALACTIC HEROES $12.00
VIDEO SINGLE: LAPUTA $12.00
VIDEO SINGLE: NAUSICAA $12.00
VIDEO SINGLE: TOTORO $12.00
VIDEO SINGLE: WITCH'S EXPRESS DELIVERY $12.00
VIFAM—"12 PEOPLE" $78.00
VIFAM—"13 PEOPLE" $66.13
VIOLENCE JACK EVIL TOWN $78.00
VIOLENCE JACK HELLSWIND $78.00
VOTOMS—BIG BATTLE $75.91
VOTOMS—LAST RED SHOULDER $85.70
VOTOMS—VOL 1 $85.70
VOTOMS—VOL 2 $85.70
VOTOMS PERFECT COLLECTION—1 $896.10
VOTOMS PERFECT COLLECTION—2 $436.89
VOTOMS VOL 1 & 2 $76.70
VOTOMS VOL 3 & 4 $76.70
VOTOMS VOL 5 & 6 $76.70
VOTOMS VOL 7 & 8 $76.70
VOTOMS VOL 9 & 10 $76.70
VOTOMS VOL 11 & 12 $76.70
WANNA BE'S $87.55
WATARU OVA $76.22
WHAT'S MICHAEL? $78.00
WHAT'S MICHAEL? II $78.00
WINDARIA $78.00
WINGS OF HONNEAMISE MEMORIAL BOX $148.00
WITCH'S EXPRESS DELIVERY $98.00
WORKS OF 15TH ANNIVERSARY $49.44
YAMATO ARRIVEDERCI $128.00
YAMATO BE FOREVER $128.00
YAMATO FINAL $128.00
YAMATO MAGIC SYMPHONY VOL 1 $78.00
YAMATO MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 2 $78.00
YAMATO MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 3 $78.00
YAMATO NEW VOYAGE $128.00
YAMATO ORIGINAL $128.00
YAMATO PERFECT BOX COLLECTION $463.50
YAMATO TV SERIES PART 1 $463.50
YANKEE $66.23
YONA—PART 1 $40.17
YONA—PART 2 $40.17
YORICHEN SAMURAI TROOPERS VIDEO COLLECTION $350.00
YORICHEN SAMURAI TROOPERS—GAIDEN VOL 1 $39.14
YORICHEN SAMURAI TROOPERS—GAIDEN VOL 2 $39.14
YOTTODEN 1 2 3 $123.60
ZILLION—BURNING NIGHT $78.00
ZILLION—COMPILATION (LI VS RIKSU...) $78.00
ZILLION—TV VOL 1 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 2 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 3 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 4 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 5 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 6 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 7 $75.91
ZILLION—TV VOL 8 $75.91
ZILLION COMPILATION—CHAMP & APPLE'S MEMORIES $75.91
ZILLION—EMI PENGUIN'S DIARY $56.44
WIZARDRY $46.35

LIVE-ACTION JAPANESE FILMS

GUNHED $91.67
GAMERA VS $95.38
ATRAGON $92.49
ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS (DESTROY ALL MONSTERS) $95.38
BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE $92.49
BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE $98.00
CAPTAIN SCARLET $98.00
DAINAJIN COLLECTION $247.20
FLYING MONSTER RODAN $95.38
FRANKENSTEIN VS BARUGAN $95.38
GAMMERA $95.38
GAMMERA VS BARUGON $98.00
GAMMERA VS GHEIRONE $95.38
GAMMERA VS GYAOS $95.38
GAMMERA VS JAGUAR $95.38
GAMMERA VS JIGURA $95.38
GAPPA
GODZILLA $95.38
GODZILLA (1984) $95.38
GODZILLA MUSIC COLLECTION $95.38
GODZILLA VS GIANT LOBSTER $95.38
GODZILLA VS GIGAN $95.38
GODZILLA VS HEDORA (SMOG MONSTER) $95.38
GODZILLA VS KING KONG $95.38
GODZILLA VS MECHA GODZILLA $95.38
GODZILLA VS MEGALON $89.00
GODZILLA VS MOTHRA $95.38
GODZILLA'S REVENGE $95.38
GODZILLA, RODAN, MOTHRA VS KING GIDORA $95.38
GODZILLAS VS. MONSTER ISLAND $95.38
GODZILLAS, MINIRA & GABARA $95.38
GORATH
KAIJIRO DAISENSO (ASTRO-MONSTER) $95.38
KAMEN RIDER VOL 1 $95.38
KAMEN RIDER VOL 2 $95.38
MONSTER BARAN $95.38
MONSTER GRAFFITI 1 2 (MAKING OF GODZILLA) $95.38
MOTHRA $95.38
MYSTERIANS $95.00
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 1 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 2 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 3 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 4 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 5 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 6 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 7 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 8 $95.38
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RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 10 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 11 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 12 $95.38
RETURN OF ULTRAMAN VOL 13 $95.38
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 1 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 2 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 3 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 4 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 5 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 6 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 7 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 8 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 9 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 10 $60.00
ULTRAMAN TARO VOL 11 $60.00
NEW ULTRAMAN VOL 1 $58.00
NEW ULTRAMAN VOL 2 $58.00
NEW ULTRAMAN VOL 3 $58.00
REVENGE OF KING KONG $95.38
REVENGE OF MECHA GODZILLA $95.38
SON OF GODZILLA $95.38
SPACE GIANTS $95.38
STINGRAY: UNDERWATER WARFARE $95.38
TWILIGHT Q VOL 1 $95.38
TWILIGHT Q VOL 2 $95.38
TWILIGHT Q VOL 3 $95.38
TWILIGHT Q VOL 5 $95.38
ULTRAMAN $56.44
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 1 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 2 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 3 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 4 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 5 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 6 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 7 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 8 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 9 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 10 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 11 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 12 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 13 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 14 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 15 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BD VOL 16 $61.80
ULTRAMAN BROTHERS VS MONSTER ARMY $48.00
ULTRAMAN STORY $48.00
ULTRAMAN THE MOVIE $75.91
ULTRAMAN VOL 1 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 2 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 3 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 4 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 5 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 6 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 7 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 8 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 9 $95.38
ULTRAMAN VOL 10 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 1 $107.12
ULTRASEVEN VOL 2 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 3 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 4 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 5 $107.12
ULTRASEVEN VOL 6 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 7 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 8 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 9 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 10 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 11 $95.38
ULTRASEVEN VOL 12 $95.38
WAR OF THE GARGANTUA $95.38
SPACE GIANTS VOL 1 $60.00
SPACE GIANTS VOL 2 $60.00
ZOFFY $48.00

ANIME COMPACT DISCS

3X3 EYES $30.00
3X3 EYES $30.00
3X3 EYES $30.00
3X3 EYES $30.00
3X3 EYES $30.00
AD POLICE ORIGINAL DRAGON TRIP $25.00
AD POLICE ORIGINAL PHANTOM LADY $30.00
AI (LOVE) CITY—SPECIAL CD $32.00
AKIRA—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $32.00
AKIRA—SYMPHONIC SUITE $32.00
AKO THE VERSUS—BLUE SIDE $28.00
AKO THE VERSUS—GREY SIDE $28.00
AMON'S SAGA $32.00
ANGEL'S EGG—MUSIC COLLECTION $32.00
ANIMAGE BEST COLLECTION $25.00
ANIMAGE BEST SYMPHONY $23.00
ANIMAGE BEST VOCAL COLLECTION
ANIMATION THE MOVIE $32.00
ANIME HOT WAVE $25.00
ANIME HOT WAVE #2
ANIME RELATED—HITOMI TOYAMA: SEVEN COURSE PROLOGUE $15.00
ANIME RELATED—H. TOYAMA: BEST COLLECTION $33.00
ANIME RELATED—JOE HISAISHI: ALPHABET CITY $32.00
ANIME RELATED—J. HISAISHI: ILLUSION $32.00
ANIME RELATED—J. HISAISHI: PIANO STORIES $32.00
ANIME RELATED—J. HISAISHI: THE DRIFTING CLASSROOM $33.00
ANIME RELATED—JUN HIROE (GUNDAM) "VOICE" $32.00
ANIME RELATED—J. HIROE: VOICE $32.00
ANIME RELATED—KANAKO WADA (ORANGE RD): ESQUISSE $32.00
ANIME RELATED—K. WADA: QUIET STORM $32.00
ANIME RELATED—K. WADA: VOCI $32.00
ANIME RELATED—KINUKO OMORI (PRISS): SWEET DREAMS $32.00
ANIME RELATED—KOHORU KOHRUSHIMA: "SO REAL" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—K. KOHRUSHIMA: "THE BEST" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—K. KOHRUSHIMA: "TIME THE MOTION" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—K. KOHRUSHIMA: I'M HERE $32.00
ANIME RELATED—K. KOHRUSHIMA: CALL MY NAME $32.00
ANIME RELATED—K. KOHRUSHIMA: HEARTS ON PARADE $32.00
ANIME RELATED—K. KOHRUSHIMA: NO PROBLEM $32.00
ANIME RELATED—KUMI MIYASATO: "...WHISPERING" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—K. MIYASATO "ALLERGY" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—K. MIYASATO: FOR YOU—BEST $32.00
ANIME RELATED—K. MIYASATO: UNFINISHED $32.00
ANIME RELATED—KYATONINDEN TEYANDE—STARCHILD
ANIME RELATED—KYATONINDEN TEYANDE—STARCHILD #2
ANIME RELATED—MARI ILIMA: KIMONO STEREO $32.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: BEST TAKES $32.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: BLANCHE $32.86
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: CD FILE $23.48
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: COQUETTISH BLUE $30.08
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: FOR LOVERS ONLY $29.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: GOLD $28.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: MADROSS SONG MEMORY $32.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: MIDORI $30.08
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: MISS LEMON $32.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: MY HEART IN RED $32.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: ROSE $32.86
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: STARLIGHT, MOONSHADOW $28.12
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: SUPER BEST $32.00
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: SUPER BEST VARIEE $32.86
ANIME RELATED—M. ILIMA: THE IDMS SONG $14.01
ANIME RELATED—PSY S: COLLECTION $32.00
ANIME RELATED—PSY S: DIFFERENT VIEW $32.00
ANIME RELATED—PSY S: MINT ELECTRIC $32.00
ANIME RELATED—PSY S: NON FICTION $32.00
ANIME RELATED—PSY S: PICNIC $32.00
ANIME RELATED—PSY S: SIGNAL $32.00
ANIME RELATED—PSY S "ATLAS" $31.00
ANIME RELATED—STEPHANIE "PINK NOISE" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—STEPHANIE (URUSEI) "HIDEAWAY" $30.08
ANIME RELATED—TAKAKO SHIRAI & CRAZY BOYS $50.00
ANIME RELATED—TETSUYA KOMURO 7 DAYS WAR $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: CAROL $30.08
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: CHILDHOOD'S END $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: DRESS $30.08
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: GIFT FOR FANNS $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: GORILLA $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: HUMAN SYSTEM $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: RAINBOW RAINBOW $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: SELF CONTROL $32.00
ANIME RELATED—TM NETWORK: TWINKLE NIGHT $20.60
ANIME RELATED—YOKO OBATA (LAPUTA) "BEST" $50.68
APPLESEED IMAGE ALBUM $30.08
APPLESEED—CRYSTAL CELEBRATION $32.00
AREA 88 $32.00
AREA 88—ACT 3 $32.00
AREA 88—IMAGE ALBUM $32.00
AREA 88—MUSIC COLLECTION $32.00
ARIEL AUDIO—1 $18.00
ARIEL AUDIO—2 $18.00
ARION—ANIMAGE HIGH TECH SERIES $32.00
ARION—BEST COLLECTION (2 DISCS) $54.00
ARION—IMAGE ALBUM $32.00
ARION—SOUNDTRACK $32.00
ARION—SYMPHONIC SUITE $32.00
ARSLAN WARS SOUNDTRACK $28.00
ASSEMBLE INSERT CONCERT $32.00
ASSEMBLE INSERT IMAGE SOUNDTRACK ALBUM $32.00
BAOH ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $32.00
BATSU & TERRY $32.00
BE-BOY: KOINAPP'N IDOL $32.00
BLACK MAGIC M-66 $32.00
BLUE SONNET—ROCK SYMPHONY I $32.00
BLUE SONNET—ROCK SYMPHONY II $32.00
BLUE SONNET—ROCK SYMPHONY III $35.00
BORGMAN—A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM $30.08
BORGMAN—LAST BATTLE $30.08
BORGMAN—LAST GIG OF THE WORLD $32.00
BORGMAN—LOVERS RAIN $30.00
BORGMAN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $30.08
BORGMAN—REALLY THE LAST GIG OF THE WORLD $30.00
BUBBLEGUM CRASH VOL 1 $28.00
BUBBLEGUM CRASH VOL 2 $28.00
BUBBLEGUM CRASH VOL 3 $28.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—1 $32.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—2: BORN TO KILL $32.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—3: BLOW UP $32.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—4: REVENGE ROAD $32.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—5: MOONLIGHT RAMBLER $32.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—6: RED EYES $32.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—7: DOUBLE VISION $30.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS—8 SCOOP CHASE $30.00
BUBBLEGUM CRISIS COMPLETE VOCAL COLLECTION #1 $32.00
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BUGGLEGUM CRASH SONG ALBUM MASQUERADE 2034 $30.00
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CD SINGLE—ANIME RELATED: K. KOHRUSHIMA $10.00
CD SINGLE—ANIME RELATED: M. NAGHMOTO "TAIRO" $9.37
CD SINGLE—ANIME RELATED: M. ILIMA $10.00
CD SINGLE—ANIME RELATED: TAKAKO SHIRAI & CRAZY BOYS $15.00
CD SINGLE—ANIME RELATED: TM NETWORK (7 DAYS WAR) $10.00
CD SINGLE—ANIME RELATED: TM NETWORK (LAZY STANCE) $10.00
CD SINGLE—ARSLAN WARS $8.00
CD SINGLE—H. TOYAMA: (IT ALL COMES DOWN TO LOVE) $10.00
CD SINGLE—BEAST GOD LIGER $10.00
CD SINGLE—BEAST GOD LIGER (YUMI HIROKI) $10.00
CD SINGLE—CITYHUNTER (GET WILD...) $10.00
CD SINGLE—CITYHUNTER 3 $8.00
CD SINGLE—CITYHUNTER2 (ANGEL NIGHT) $10.00
CD SINGLE—DIRTY PAIR OVA SOUNDTRACK $15.00
CD SINGLE—DIRTY PAIR TV OP/CLOSING $10.00
CD SINGLE—DOUBLE ZETA GUNDAM $10.00
CD SINGLE—DRAGONAR $10.00
CD SINGLE—DUNBINE $10.00
CD SINGLE—FIVE STARS STORIES $15.00
CD SINGLE—GUNDAM 0080: WAR IN THE POCKET $10.00
CD SINGLE—GUNDAM 0083 $10.00
CD SINGLE—GUNDAM 1 $10.00
CD SINGLE—GUNDAM F-91 (ETERNAL WIND $9.00
CD SINGLE—GUYVER $12.00
CD SINGLE—JOE HISAISHI (NIGHT CITY) $10.00
CD SINGLE—KANAKO WADA (SUMMER MIRAGE) $10.00
CD SINGLE—KONAGUMI ORANGE ROAD $10.00
CD SINGLE—L-GAIM $10.00
CD SINGLE—LUPIN III $12.36
CD SINGLE—MEGAZONE 23 III $10.00
CD SINGLE—MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO EP $10.00
CD SINGLE—ORANGE ROAD SOMETIMES BLUE $10.00
CD SINGLE—RANMA 1/2 $11.33
CD SINGLE—S.D. GUNDAM $15.00
CD SINGLE—SAINT SEIYA $10.00
CD SINGLE—SANDAKAI OTOKO JUKU MOVIE $10.00
CD SINGLE—SHURATO $10.00
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CD SINGLE—SPT LAYZNER $10.00
CD SINGLE—TM NETWORK (BEYOND THE TIME) $10.00
CD SINGLE—TM NETWORK RESISTANCE $12.46
CD SINGLE—URUSEI YATSURA $10.00
CD SINGLE—UTSUNOMIKO OPENING THEME $10.00
CD SINGLE—YURI KUNZANE $10.00
CD SINGLE—ZETA GUNDAM $12.36
CD SINGLE: ANIME RELATED—JOE HISAISHI "THE INNERS" $8.00
CD SINGLE: ARIEL (NEW) $10.00
CD SINGLE: BUBBLEGUM CRISIS 7 $15.45
CD SINGLE: FIVE STAR STORIES $11.23
CD SINGLE: KIKI $9.37
CD SINGLE: REPLICANT SCANDEL (KEIJIKUTO) $9.30
CD SINGLE: MAGIC THE WINNER (GUNDAM 0083) $9.38
CD SINGLE: PATLABOR OPENING/ENDING THEME $9.00
CD SINGLE: PATLABOR TV SERIES $10.00
CD SINGLE: RANMA 1/2 "TANNIN" $10.00
CD SINGLE: RECORD OF LODOSS WAR ODYSSEY $9.30
CD SINGLE: THE ALFEE "STARSHIP" (LENGNAN) $9.38
CD SINGLE: TRANSFORMER Z $9.00
CD SINGLE: YUMI ARAI (KIKI) $9.37
CD SINGLE: YUMI ARAI (KIKI) "KUSHU NO DEN..." $9.37
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CIPHER $20.00
CIPHER $23.50
CIPHER $30.00
CITYHUNTER—DRAMATIC MASTER $32.86
CITYHUNTER—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 1 $32.00
CITYHUNTER—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 2 $32.00
CITYHUNTER 2—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 1 $32.00
CITYHUNTER 2—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 2 $32.00
CITYHUNTER 3—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $28.00
CITYHUNTER BAY CITY WARS $30.00
CITYHUNTER DRAMATIC MASTER 2 $40.00
CITYHUNTER MOVIE $30.08
CLEOPATRA D.C. $32.00
CRUSHER JOE—SUPER COLLECTION $32.00
CRUSHER JOE—SYMPHONIC SUITE $35.00
CRUSHER JOE OVA—SOUNDTRACK $30.00
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DAIMAJIN $32.00
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DETONATOR ORGAN VOL 1 $28.00
DETONATOR ORGAN VOL 2 $28.00
DETONATOR ORGAN VOL 3 $28.00
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DRAGON FIST ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $30.00
DRAGON KNIGHT $24.00
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DRAGONAR—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 1 $32.00
DRAGONAR—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 2 $32.00
DRAGONAR—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 3 $32.00
DREAM HUNTER $30.00
DUNBINE—BGM COLLECTION I $30.00
DUNBINE—BGM COLLECTION II $30.00
DUNBINE—BGM COLLECTION III $30.00
EARTHIAN II $30.00
EARTHIAN ORIGINAL ALBUM 1 $32.00
EARTHIAN ORIGINAL ALBUM 2 $32.00
ENEMY PIRATE ORIGINAL BGM $30.08
ETRANGER—MUSIC COLLECTION $32.00
F MUSIC COLLECTION $32.00
FAMOUS DETECTIVE HOLMES COLLECTION $25.00
FAMOUS DETECTIVE HOLMES ORIG SOUNDTRACK $32.00
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FIVE STAR STORIES IMAGE ALBUM $32.00
FIVE STAR STORIES MOVIE—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $32.00
FUMA NO KOJIRO $15.00
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GAL FORCE—EARTH $28.12
GAL FORCE—ETERNAL STORY ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $32.00
GAL FORCE EARTH MUSIC $25.00
GALAXY EXPRESS 999—ADIEU ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $32.00
GALAXY EXPRESS 999—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $32.00
GALAXY EXPRESS 999—SYMPHONY $32.00
GALIANT—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 1 $30.00
GALIANT—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 2 $30.00
GARAGA ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK $30.08
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GOD BLESS DAIKOUGAR $32.00
GODZILLA CHRONOLOGY—1 $30.08
GODZILLA CHRONOLOGY—2 $30.08
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GUNDAM 0080: WAR IN THE POCKET SOUNDSKETCH 2	$30.00
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HOKUTO NO KEN—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
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ICZER 1: SPECIAL CD VOL 2	$32.00
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ICZER 3: SOUNDTRACK #1	$25.00
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KIJUKIDO —IMAGE	$32.00
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L GAIM—BGM VOL 2	$30.00
L GAIM—BGM VOL 3	$30.00
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LAPUTA—SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
LAPUTA—SYMPHONY	$32.00
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LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES—SERIES BGM	$30.08
LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES SOUNDTRACK BOX	$57.00
LEGEND OF THE LION FLAIRE	$30.00
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LEINA STOL 1	$32.00
LEINA STOL 2	$32.00
LEINA STOL 3	$32.00
LENSMAN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.86
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LILY C.A.T.	$32.00
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LUPIN III—2: ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$33.00
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LUPIN III—CALIOSTRO BGM	$33.00
LUPIN III—CALIOSTRO ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$33.00
LUPIN III—JAM TRIP	$35.00
LUPIN III—ORIGINAL BGM COLLECTION	$32.00
LUPIN III—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$33.00
LUPIN III—PART III	$32.00
LUPIN III—PERFECT COLLECTION	$33.00
LUPIN III—PLOT OF THE 'WIND DEMON	$32.00
LUPIN III—TV ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$33.00
LUPIN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$27.00
LUPIN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK 2	$27.00
LUPIN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK 3	$27.00
MACHINE ROBO—REVENGE OF CHRONOS	$32.00
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MACROSS—BGM COLLECTION	$32.00
MACROSS—MILKYWAY IN THE FALLING SNOW	$32.00
MACROSS—MISS DJ SPECIAL	$32.00
MACROSS—ORCHESTRATION	$32.86
MACROSS—SONG COLLECTION	$32.00
MAISON IKKOKU—FINAL MOVIE	$30.00
MAISON IKKOKU—MUSIC BLEND 2	$33.00
MAISON IKKOKU—MUSIC COCKTAIL	$33.00
MAISON IKKOKU—MUSIC SOUR	$30.00
MAISON IKKOKU CD COLLECTION	$122.16
MAMORU NAGANO 5 STAR STORIES	$28.00
MARIONETTE GENERATION ORIGINAL ALBUM	$35.00
MEGAZONE 23—FOUR SPIRITS	$32.00
MEGAZONE 23—PART 1	$32.00
MEGAZONE 23—PART 3	$32.00
MEGAZONE 23—PART II: THE LAST TARGET	$32.00
MEGAZONE 23—PART II: MUSIC COLLECTION	$32.00
MEGAZONE 23—SONG COLLECTION	$32.00
MEGAZONE 23—VOCAL COLLECTION	$25.00
MERMAID OF THE WOODS ORIG SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
MOBILESUIT GUNDAM—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 1	$30.00
MOBILESUIT GUNDAM—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 2	$30.00
MOBILESUIT GUNDAM—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 3	$30.00
MOBILESUIT GUNDAM I—BGM COLLECTION	$30.00
MOBILESUIT GUNDAM II—BGM COLLECTION	$32.00
MOBILSUITE GUNDAM 0083 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
MOSPEADA—LOVE, LIVE, ALIVE—ORIGINAL	$32.00
MOSPEADA—SUPER COLLECTION	$32.00
MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO—IMAGE SONGS	$32.00
MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO DRAMA	$48.00
NADIA & THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
NADIA & THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK 1	$30.00
NADIA & THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK 2	$30.00
NADIA & THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER VOCAL COLLECTION	$30.00
NAUSICAA—BEST COLLECTION (2 DISCS)	$54.00
NAUSICAA—IMAGE ALBUM	$32.00
NAUSICAA—SOUNDTRACK	$35.00
NAUSICAA—SYMPHONY	$35.00
NAUSICAA DRAMA	$48.00
NEKO DE GOHEN	
NEMO ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$98.00
NEW BEST NOW	$30.08
NG KNIGHT LAMUNE & 40 "HQ BGM"	
ONLY YESTERDAY IMAGE ALBUM	$30.00
ORANGE ROAD	$30.00
ORANGE ROAD—CD COLLECTION (SPECIAL BGM)	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—LOVING HEART	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—MOVIE SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—ORANGE STATION	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—ORIGINAL DRAMA	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—SINGING HEART	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—SOUND COLOR 1	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—SOUND COLOR 2	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—SOUND COLOR 3	$32.00
ORANGE ROAD—SOUND COLOR BOX	$130.00
ORANGE ROAD MOGITATE SPECIAL	$50.00
ORATORIO SOAPE	$30.00
ORGUSS—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
ORIGINAL ANIME HITS	$22.00
OUTLANDERS—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
PATLABOR—SONG COLLECTION VOL 3	$32.00
PATLABOR IMAGE SOUNDTRACK 4 INFINITY	$32.00
PATLABOR MOVIE SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
PATLABOR ON TELEVISION	$20.00
PATLABOR ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 2	$20.00
PATLABOR ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK VOL 3	$20.00
PATLABOR THEME COLLECTION SPECIAL	$18.00
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PREFECTURAL EARTH DEFENSE FORCE—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
PROJECT A KO ORIGINAL SONGBOOK	$25.00
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PROJECT AKO FINAL CONCERT	$25.00
PROJECT AKO FINAL ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
PROJECT AKO IMAGE ALBUM	$25.00
PROJECT ZEORYMER "GREAT WADES"	$25.00
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PURPLE EYES IN THE DARK PART 2	$30.08
RANMA 1/2	$28.00
RANMA 1/2 HOT FIGHTING MUSIC COLLECTION	$28.00
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RANMA 1/2 MUSIC COLLECTION	$28.00
RANMA 1/2 SONG CALENDER	$32.00
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
RECORD OF LODOSS WAR ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK 2	$30.00
RHEA GAL FORCE	$15.00
RIDING BEAN	$32.00
RIKI-OH	$29.20
ROBOT CARNIVAL—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
RYOKUNOHARA LABYRINTH MELODIC WAVE	$30.00
S.D. GUNDAM	$30.08
SAINT SEIYA—"HIT COLLECTION"	$30.90
SAINT SEIYA—BGM COLLECTION III	$33.00
SAINT SEIYA—MUSIC COLLECTION 2	$32.00
SAINT SEIYA—MUSIC COLLECTION I	$30.00
SAINT SEIYA—BGM COLLECTION 7	$32.00
SAINT SEIYA —PIANO FANTASIA	$32.00
SAKIGAKE! OTOKO JUKU—MUSIC COLLECTION	$32.00
SAKIGAKE! OTOKO JUKU MOVIE	$32.00
SALAMANDER MUSIC COLLECTION	$30.00
SAMAURAI TROOPERS	$30.00
SAMURAI TROOPERS— BEST FRIENDS	$32.00
SD GUNDAM	$30.00
SD GUNDAM—TAISHOSHOKUNIA	$32.00
SD GUNDAM TOKYO SHUFFLE	$30.08
SHONAN BAKUSO SOKU ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK #5	$32.00
SHURATO	$28.43
SHURATO	$30.00
SHURATO—"SOUL LOVERS ONLY!"	$32.00
SILENT MOBIUS	$30.00
SILENT MOBIUS "EMERGENCY"	$32.00
SILENT MOBIUS "WARNING"	$32.00
SLOW STEP ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
SOL BIANCA	$32.00
SOL BIANCA 2	$30.00
SONGS FOR DAINCOUGAR	$32.00
SORYUDEN ORIG SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
SOUTHERN CROSS—BEST COLLECTION (2 DISCS)	$54.00
SPT LAYZNER—BGM VOL 1	$32.00
SPT LAYZNER—BGM VOL 2	$32.00
SPT LAYZNER—BGM VOL 3	$32.00
SPT LAYZNER—BGM VOL 4 (AN EXTRA)	$32.00
SPT LAYZNER, THE MUSIC OF	$28.00
STARSHIP TROOPERS	$32.00
SUPER NOVA	$32.00
SUPERGAL	$30.08
SWEET MINT	$30.00
TEZUKA MEMORIAL DOUBLE CD SET	$45.00
THE ALFEE (LENSMAN) :BEST SELECTION	$32.86
TIME STRANGER—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
TO-Y: ORIGINAL IMAGE ALBUM	$32.00
TOBIKAGE—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$30.00
TOM CAT "BEST" (HOKUTO NO KEN 2)	$30.08
TOMORROW'S JOE—BEST COLLECTION (2 DISCS)	$54.00
TOUCH—MUSIC FLAVOR 3	$30.00
TOUCH—ORIGINAL SONG BOOK 1	$32.00
TOUCH—ORIGINAL SONG BOOK 2	$32.00
TOUCH MUSIC FLAVOR 4	$30.00
TOUCH MUSIC FLAVOR 5	$30.00
TOUCH 1	$32.00
TOUCH 2	$32.00
TOUCH BEST SONG BOOK	$30.00
ULTRAMAN USA ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
UMI NO YAMI, TSUKI NO KAGE "LAST MESSAGE"	$32.00
URUSHIMAN	$28.00
URBAN SQUARE	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—1990 MUSIC CALENDAR	$22.00
URUSEI YATSURA—BEAUTIFUL DREAMER (2ND MOVIE)	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—BOY MEETS GIRL (FINAL MOVIE)	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—FOREVER BEST	$32.00
URUSEI YATSURA—JUKE BOX 1	$33.00
URUSEI YATSURA—JUKE BOX 2	$33.00
URUSEI YATSURA—LUM FOR THE WORLD	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—LUM THE FOREVER (4TH MOVIE)	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—MUSIC FILE (2 DISCS)	$55.00
URUSEI YATSURA—ONLY YOU (FIRST MOVIE)	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—REMEMBER MY LOVE (3RD MOVIE)	$30.00
URUSEI YATSURA—SYMPHONY	$33.00
URUSEI YATSURA CD COLLECTION	$225.57
UTSUNOMIKO IMAGE ALBUM	$60.00
UTSUNOMIKO ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
UTSUNOMIKO OVA ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$28.00
VAMPIRE HUNTER "D"	$32.00
VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU MUSIC COLLECTION	$28.00
VENUS WARS—IMAGE ALBUM (JOE HISAISHI)	$32.00
VENUS WARS—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
VIFAM—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 1	$30.00
VIFAM—MUSIC COLLECTION VOL 2	$30.00
VIFAM—NEW BGM	$30.00
VOTOMS—THE MUSIC OF VOTOMS	$30.00
VOTOMS—VOL 1	$30.00
VOTOMS—VOL 2	$30.00
VOTOMS—VOL 3	$30.00
WILD 7 ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
WINDARIA—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$32.00
WINGMAN	$28.00
WINGS OF HONNEAMISE—ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	$35.00
WINGS OF HONNEMISE IMAGE SKETCH 12" RECORD	$15.00
WITCH'S EXPRESS DELIVERY IMAGE	$30.08
WITCH'S EXPRESS DELIVERY SOUNDTRACK	$30.08
WITCH'S EXPRESS DELIVERY VOCAL ALBUM	$23.00
WITCH'S EXPRESS VOCAL ALBUM	$30.00
YAMATO—AIRMISSIERO YAMATO	$32.00
YAMATO—BEST COLLECTION (2 DISCS)	$54.00
YAMATO—GRAND SYMPHONY	$35.00
YAMATO—SYMPHONIC SUITE	$32.00
YANKEE	$32.00
YAWARAI	$30.00
YAWARAI SOUND COLLECTION	$30.00
YAWARAI SOUND SELECTION	$30.00
YONA	$30.00
YOTODEN 1	$32.00
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ANIMATION: WHAT'S NEXT?

There's a lot more to international animation than you might suppose. Recent shorts from Eastern Europe and groundbreaking computer animation promise to change animation forever

SECOND OF A TWO-PART ARTICLE

BY MICHAEL KURCFELD

New Voices from Europe and Asia

With its many years as art under surveillance, Eastern European animation has its own built-in gravity. Often cast in the dire role of counter-agitprop, it may have something to teach Western artists about political sentiments that don't capsize the cartoon.

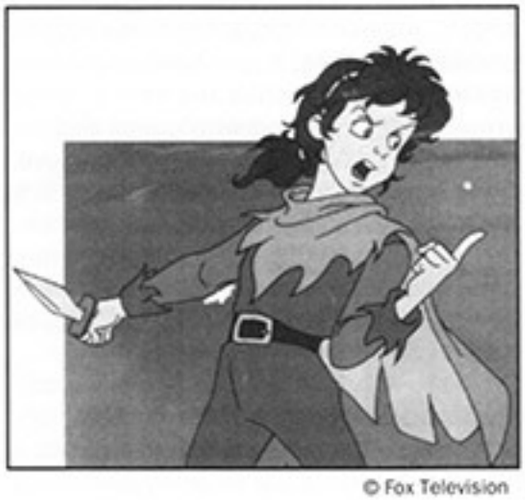
Hungary is considered ground zero for serious animation in that neighborhood, especially Pannonia Film and Csaba Varga Studio. Pannonia's reel boasts a staggering range of media—computer, cutout, cel, coaldust, even tattooed flesh. Though some of it gets a bit cloying, and ingenuous, a lot of it comes weighted with stern subtext. A general led unsuspectingly through a hero's parade, gathering medals, to his own coffin. Elegiac renditions of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, and Noah's Ark. A winsome play of color and shape that turns into a military invasion of an island nation. A bird that turns into shadowy citizens obviously in political straits. A boy who plays on a metamorphosing M.C. Escher stairway and has a vision of a man whose penis turns into a tank cannon. Shrill symbolism, perhaps, but often deeply affecting—maybe because there's more empathy for art that treads a political tightrope.

To make *The Coiling Prankster*, Russia's Garri Bardin took over two years to turn wire figures into a parable about paranoia. Thanks to a cartoon's knack for microcosm, Bardin's agitated little man, reduced to trading his own wife and home for illusory safety, becomes an effigy of anyone whose own mind becomes complicit in a state's oppression. His countryman, Alexander Petrov, has won all sorts of prizes for *Cow*, a wintry monochrome portrait of subsistence life in the the Russian steppe—gauzily captured in oil on glass in grim shimmers. Piotr Dumala of Poland uses simple line to describe the man whose own leg escapes to freedom.

This dark parade of allegorical men offers, in the braille of art, what free men might not see. Probably that mission is going to change in Eastern Europe now that it's legal to breathe again. But then there's *Balance*, from prosperous West Germany, with which the brothers Lauenstein managed to make a Kafkaesque pitch for cooperative brotherhood without the family-of-man schmaltz. A group of haunted, bug-eyed men inhabit an empty floating plane that will only stay level if they stand in reciprocal positions. A music box comes into their midst, and they vie for it until, like checkers, they're reduced to a solitary man sentenced to remain the box's counterweight. Can animation like this budge a world, or a single mind? Maybe just wanting to is enough.

As Toontown evolves into Planet Toon, we're seeing more and more traffic between animation meccas. Most of America's animation drudgework gets farmed out to Asia, and many American animators now work in Europe. There's clearly the potential for developing potent hybrids, and loftier aims.

Margaret Loesch, once head of Marvel and now running children's programming at Fox, is partnering with an independent Kiev studio to make a new version of *Peter Pan*. "I think the product," says Loesch, "by virtue of the international collaboration, is going to improve greatly because we're all learning from each other."



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She thinks China will be next. "The Chinese culture encourages artistry, and they have a huge labor pool. Some of our overseas operations are subcontracting some *Peter Pan* material to China. The work I've seen is excellent, they just have to learn the process—and be a little more motivated by the capitalistic system."

Apart from "the product," the real question here is, once the Chinese have mastered our animation, what kinds of work will we see in defiance of the present regime?

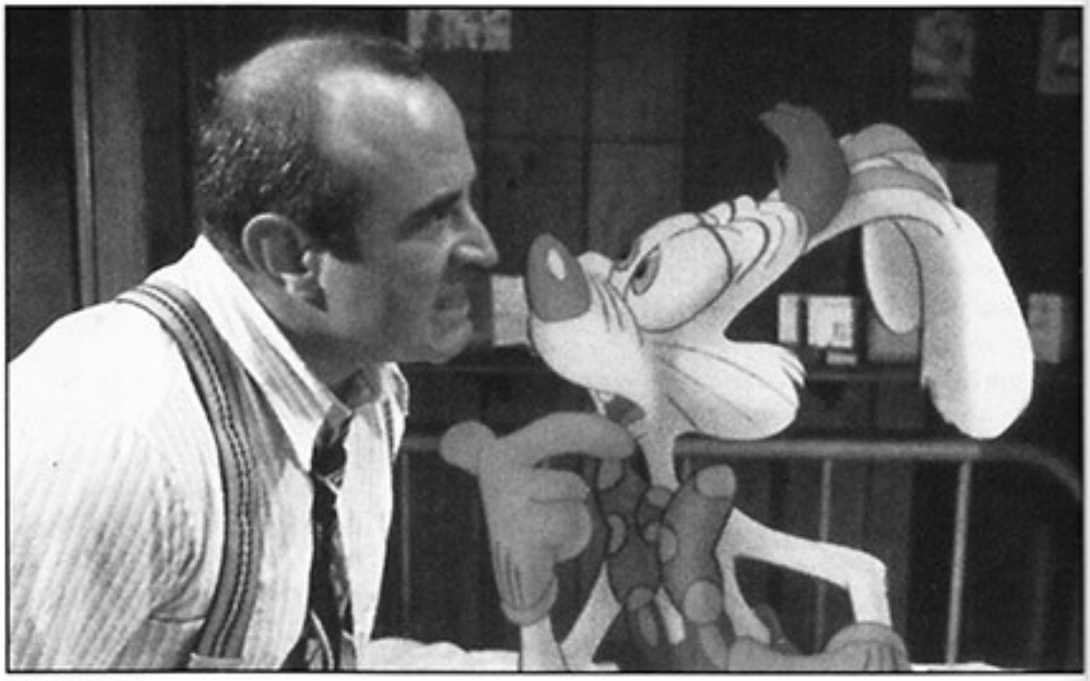
The most powerful symbiosis among the world's animators so far has been the compilation of shorts illustrating each of Amnesty International's thirty *Universal Articles of Human Rights*, orchestrated by Stephen Johnson for the 1988 Human Rights Tour. It was cartoon as sacrament, in a cascade of abbreviated styles that showed animation's value as a vehicle for terse communication and blunt polemic—in an era where that's all anybody has room for. Though it's argued that such niblets of fellowship have little staying power, no one really knows which images will exert the gravity to pull history toward them. The most political, liberating act of animation, of course, is simply providing a universal tongue that gets more eloquent each year. And, one hopes, less civil.

In England, a few years ago, Geoff Dunbar adapted Alfred Jarry's 1910 avant-garde classic, *Ubu Roi*, in a blistering cartoon style indebted to Ralph Steadman and Richard Lindner. Ubu, a walking obscenity ravenous for power and driven to regicide by his harpy wife, reeks of angry allegory. Dunbar perfectly caught the bilious tenor of Jarry's curdled work: the grunt-honk caterwauling, the argot of the id.

More recently, David Anderson animated *Deadsy*, a ghoulish little farce written and narrated by Russell Hoban, a respected British novelist with an apocalyptic bent. Anderson's flinchy rotoscope-Xerox-puppet-and-what-not style, a jolly horrorshow shot against black, clothes the tale of a lad growing up obsessed with death and his reversible "sex-o-thingie" (to get more love, Deadsy transforms into Miss Universe). It has punk's deadpan flirtation with nihilism, and a terrific sort of pidgin Expressionism—a look and attitude that suggest a squeamy new genre for people raised on the Sex Pistols and horrormeister Clive Barker.

Postmodernism's New Name

To anyone looking for animation so fresh it puckers, London is the place—thanks to its many good art schools, a TV network (Channel Four) that actually funds experimental projects at home and abroad, and an advertising world that allows hip animation houses to take creative reign. Seeded by the outrageous visions of people like Dunbar and Anderson, loony geniuses like Monty Python-era Terry Gilliam, and years of punk-flavored graphics, studios like Felix Films, 3 Peach, Hibbert/Ralph and Animation City are mixmastering styles for ads that are more audacious than most music videos.



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Aardman Animation, which produced Penny Cartoons for *Peewee's Playhouse*, excels in making clay figures act like people you remember. Under their roof, David Sproxton and Peter Lord have created a series of "conversation pieces" synched to seemingly candid audio recordings—such as the group of bantering magazine editors, whose facial slang and thirtysomething bon mots take this material far beyond the California Raisin belt. With the right backing, these guys would be capable of clay feats deep in the Serious zone.

Redwing Studio's Marc Kitchen-Smith made a video for *Robot Girl* by Was Not Was that used an intoxicating combination of art-deco cel, Red Grooms-ish 3-D sets, performance art, Bauhaus costume and '50s design quotes. It may be skin-deep burlesque, but it's the kind of catalytic rummaging through Art that invokes that old zeitgeist-grabber, postmodernism.

After years of being heckled by culture-heads as the term most bled of all meaning, postmodernism has a zippier name: Blendo. Coined by a San Diego architect in 1984, feted in an issue of *California* magazine the same year, Blendo now shows up in PC graphics mags as another word for multimedia.

It's a contagion that has overtaken much new animation. Think of Blendo as the handmaiden of the new internationalism—world this and world that. It's about the democracy of media and style, the most literal scratch of the Berlin-Wall itch—tearing down boundaries and splicing effects. The most obvious strain right now is the fusion of live-action with animation, of which the examples are legion—from *Roger Rabbit* and Japan's *Twilight of the Cockroaches* to *Hollywood Dog* and the latest Allstate ad. If used too much, of course, Blendo becomes the Hamburger Helper of design.

Blendo loves velocity, like MTV's ten-second IDs (over 100 have been commissioned by now). It's not just animation in the fast lane—the kwazy '40s were fast—a lot of this stuff is so machine-gun-paced that it becomes subliminal, pictures on speed.

The hippest TV show in Europe last season (it was aired here, but no one noticed) was MTV's London-based *BUZZ*, which took the essence of animation—discrete-frame manipulation—and packed it with editorial, often too oblique for its own good. What you got was visual shrapnel. But the advancing generations weaned on Nintendo and variable-speed VCRs will no doubt find this sort of thing as friendly as *I Love Lucy* reruns.

It's fair to say that the omnivorous spirit of Blendo has given us instant classics like Stephen Johnson's eye-slapping video of Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer*, and Jim Blashfield's chimeric carnival ride in Michael Jackson's *Leave Me Alone*. Lesser known is San Francisco-based Henry Selick, who's the first to admit that crossbred animation has been around at least since *Yellow Submarine*. Influenced by Jan Svankmajer, a Czech who uses stop-motion puppets in grimly funny ways that also inspired the Quay Brothers (*Street of Crocodiles*), Selick's MTV IDs are small wonders of dream-fluid fantasmagoria that upstage whatever follows.

Selick is now working on a 4.5-minute series pilot for MTV called "Slow Bob in the Lower Dimension." It features a live actor who plays a kind of anti-Superman—an alien who becomes the slowest guy on Earth. He's kept in an attic and tormented by his twin stepsisters, who will be stop-motioned. "In compensation for his lousy life," says Selick, "he gets to go of on these cheap animated adventures, as a 2-D character, all in cutout animation. It's pretty dark, and pretty funny." Selick has plans to collaborate with Bill Sienkiewicz, a creator of graphic novels who has himself worked with Alan Moore (*Watchmen*).

Blendo has been designated an official house strategy at Colossal Pictures, a progressive San Francisco-based production company. One of the best results is Liquid Television, now being assembled for MTV. "Liquid TV is defined by its attitude," says Japhatt Asher, who heads the project, "and that attitude is: Why not? There are no rules. You want to do what people haven't seen before, and you ask yourself why people haven't seen it."

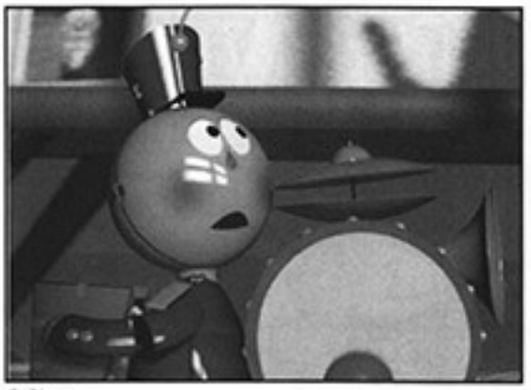
The show, a huge boon to non-mainstream animation, will air mostly original pieces ranging from fifteen seconds to four minutes. There'll be ongoing segments with characters who come back week-to-week, departments with recognizable themes, and odd nuggets that appear once and vanish forever. In the planning stages are the first soap opera with bars of soap, and a spoofy sci-fi serial featuring a femme-fatale superhero.

The important thing here is the ongoing availability of short-format television congenial to art that isn't trying to satisfy record companies. If this kind of showcase (the *RAW* magazine of animation?) spurs all those restless animators to experiment more, the medium might just deserve the hardware that is beginning to inundate it.

The Mechanical Edge: Computers

Computer animation has always been a shameless tease, both low-end and high-end. As a near-perfect metaphor for the human imagination—so much potential, and so much compromise—it keeps promising that the creativity will flow with less sweat, from the less talented. The PC cosmos has acquired a subculture that's a sort of New Age electronic bazaar of audio-visual dilettantism. At "cyberarts" conventions and the like, one is accosted by new-tech messiahs selling cyberdelic confections like a video full of dynamic paisleying keyed to vintage Moody Blues.

The prospect of millions of Commodore Amigas and their ilk spawning armies of home-grown animators is both encouraging and chilling. Will this become the visual equivalent of garage bands, crystallizing the marginal by eliminating the need for big-budget production? Could this enhance the kind of one-guy-and-a-pen conditions that have made it easier for graphic novelists to venture off deep ends? The real revolution here



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is making animation a more intimate medium, less tied to studio bottom lines and the corporate vanity of advertising clients.

About to be unveiled are CDIs, interactive visual CDs. It's a whole new department store wing's worth of technology, based on something called hypertext, that will beg us to customize storylines, try on hairdos, pre-redecorate our condos and further cartoonify our lives. In an age where politics comes in speech balloons, human psychology in slim volumes at the checkout counter and we all have three-minute attention spans, where advertising and showbiz have infantilized the populace, and everything is Slick & Simple, cartoons may become the most realistic illusion.

There's been a hail of media about virtual reality, so we'll be brief. Longhair visionary Jaron Lanier has created a concept, and rudimentary systems to go with it, of wholly synthetic environments which are currently experienced via "head-mounted displays, data gloves and data suits." The effect has been described both as a controllable acid trip and like stepping inside a cartoon. You can actually interact with phantom objects, and there's speculation about digitally siring complex characters that will "live" in these artificial worlds.

Even though the resolution is still low, and the motion is not quite real-time yet, virtual reality is a spectral means of externalizing internal realms (and vice versa), and therefore qualifies as the Brave New World of animation.

The post-production house has become the sacred workplace of the entertainment industry, the place where experience is digitized and psycho-packaged, the heartbeat of the Look, and the fulcrum of the budget. The current robosuperstar is a halfmillion-dollar gadget called The Harry, an nth-generation paint-and-wire box lending the latest image-crunching sophistications to the venerable art of collage. It can take virtually any kind and number of still or moving image and key them seamlessly together. The Harry is becoming the ultimate video animation tool, and now Kodak has developed a system that allows the same capability for film, effectively making this supertoy into a one-stop special effects bonanza.

Max Almy and Teri Yarbrow are a team of computer artists who have a non-commercial agenda for Harry. They recently made *The Thinker*, a short video that had satirist Ian Shoales evolve through the stages of human intellect, from ape to yuppie—full circle, by their account. The duo are now planning to create a piece based on the eco-feminist Gaia Theory of pre-history, using performance artist Rachel Rosenthal.

Also blending with live theater is Rebecca Allen, who created computer animation designed for seventy suspended monitors as part of the total environment of an experimental Barcelona theater troupe called La Fura Dels Baus. Allen believes that the new technology needs to find its own style, not merely emulate the tried-and-true. "It's too bad," she says, "that the cutting edge of computer animation is being used almost entirely for a fifty-year-old aesthetic."

What she's talking about is an R&D community whose miraculous software, slavishly reproducing more and more of the optical textures of reality, is being used to make cartoons the old-fashioned way. John Lasseter is the only Disney vet who now works exclusively on a computer. His creations for Pixar (once a part of Lucasfilm, but now a commercial arm of Colossal Pictures) are considered state of the art. He makes the math breathe. Apart from being technically avant-garde and flawlessly executed, his short films are admired for having ingratiating little aw-shucks stories to humanize them.

In the Oscar-winning *Tin Toy*, for instance, a toy soldier is terrorized by an infant until he's able to escape, only to return again to act as pacifier—conflict and resolution! In computerland, this is high drama. Even though the infant is grotesque (computers still don't do organic very well), it's a big step from flying logos and Platonic water reflections, and a lot of computer animators are

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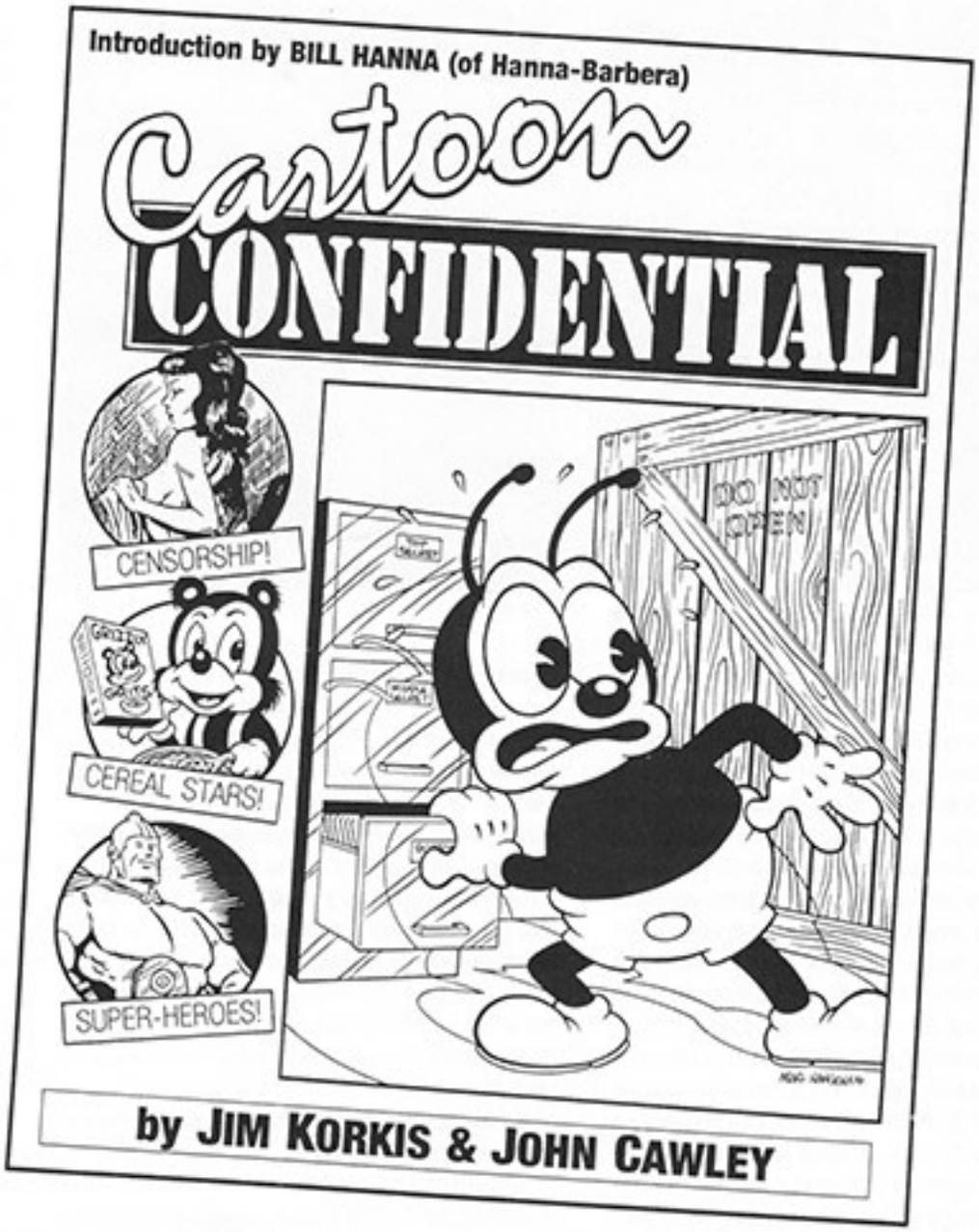

INTRODUCTION BY BILL HANNA (of Hanna-Barbera)

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coming out with these McStories. (At a recent computer graphics convention, several people were seen wearing buttons that said, "I don't do cute.")

The best computer short out this year is Karl Sim's *Panspermia*, a soaring visual hors d'oeuvre about an intergalactic spore that lands on a barren planet and effloresces wildly until the terrain is lush. It may be eye candy, but it offers one of cinema's essentials: a believable world.

Shelley Lake's *Polly Gone* has no desire to be a streamlined version of cel animation. Lake finds the computer-generated universe exquisitely alien from real life, and pumps up the eeriness to the point where her polygonal android-hausfrau—brushing her teeth, ironing the clothes—becomes a kind of exhibitionist of machine intelligence. Singing the body electric, Lake exploits what her programs do best, like harrowing tracking shots that feel like you're riding the nervous system of a highstrung robot. It's just another kind of intimacy, the synaptic-level master-slave thing that we increasingly experience with the electronics in our lives.

Everyone agrees that the Achilles heel of computer animation is character. With its airless, matte-plastic look of unforgiving rigidity—the sense of things locked into some master control, automaton-like—it's hard to compete with cel animation's hand-hewn acting and euphoric defiance of physics. Without that whiff of human anarchy, computers fail to elude the chaste aspect of immaculate conception, which overpowers the subject unless it's kept in the subservient role of special effects or background.

But Michael Wahrman and Brad DeGraf want to try. At DeGraf/Wahrman, the name of the game is Performance Character Animation—a patented method of digitizing and storing key poses of a live actor, then hooking it all up to a joystick that manipulates the facial expressions. Puppeteers are then hired to "act" while viewing their character's image on a monitor. This technique was used to create a real-time opera singer, who fooled professionals, and the best thing in *Robocop 2*: he evil robot's cybernetic face.

According to Wahrman, computer replication of human reality—a new Elvis movie, say—is about a decade away. In the meantime, these heirs to Max Headroom would make the perfect talk show host. "I think we should do Arsenio Hall. He's a cartoon anyway."

John Whitney Jr., head of the computer graphics firm called Optomystic, figures if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Working with Hanna-Barbera, he's developed a system that automates cel animation's final labor-intensive phase—the ink and paint process. That means the drawings are done by hand and the opaquing by computer. According to Whitney, this is Hanna-Barbera's way of not having to subcontract overseas.

Optomystic has also perfected Dynamic Texture Flow, which allows them to bring to life a static image—recently, Da Vinci's *Deluge Drawings*. All of art history theoretically awaits animation. They have a program for creating vast numbers of particles, such as for depicting galaxies and the like in *Astronomy*, an ambitious six-part computer animation-filled series for KCET.

Sidley/Wright, another local outfit, is also working on *Astronomy*, developing the software that will simulate gravity waves, curvatures of space, black holes and other corners of the astrophysicist's dreamworld. At the cutting edge is metamorphic animation, which allows one to change the shape of something in time, while keeping kosher all the physical laws of stretched surface and light reflection.

© Orion Pictures

In the crucial enterprise of merging cel and computer animation—call it Cyberblendo—Bill Kroyer is the flip side of Optomystic. Kroyer, one of the most liked and admired innovators in the field, is best known so far for *Technological Threat*, an Oscar-nominated short that made knockabout Looney Tune comedy out of automation anxiety—Man (wolves, actually) replaced by office robots. Genuinely funny, it was also a way of using the computer to thread in social commentary.

Now Kroyer has found bigger prey. He spent two weeks in an Australian rain forest gathering material for *Fern Gully: The Last Rainforest*, an animated feature about a teenager attached to a massive logging project who, saved from a falling tree by a fairy, is shrunk down to her tiny size. They fall in love and save the forest, but not without travails and a good dose of eco-symbolism.

Kroyer uses the computer to dump series of wire-frame drawings (of backgrounds, vehicles and many of the forest creatures) onto hard copy. "The solidity, the perspective, all those things the computer does well, we use. Then the animator can go in and do expressions, the lip-synch and all the stuff animators do better. There are a lot of tricks like this that people never really used before, because they felt it was either one or the other." What Kroyer wants to end up with is a film with a hand-animated look but a dramatically more spatial, kinetic feeling—almost a new medium. If all goes as planned, *Fern Gully* will not only add considerable road to the evolution of computer-assisted animation, it will advance the message-cartoon to a new plateau.

Eco-Animation

Environmentalism has a lot of friends these days. Hanna-Barbera is making an eco-feature called *The Endangered*. MTV hired animators to create a series of spots that illustrate pointed facts about eco-crimes and misdemeanors ("The Earth is NOT a Cartoon!"). Aardman's *Harvest for the World* video for The Christians featured clay-animated African children crawling up out of parched desert, and a fat cat playing with peasants on strings. And Ted Turner hired L.A. cartoon factory DIC to make his brainchild, *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, into a children's TV series.

This last item underscores the perils of peddling pieties, no matter how just the cause. Five teens from around the world are anointed as Planeteers by Gaia, the spirit of Earth, in order to battle eco-villains like Looten Plunder and Verminous Skumm. Each is given an elemental power, and together they're able to summon Captain Planet, whose Kryptonite is toxic waste. Kids say it's fun, but to adults—which is where we began here—it's often contrived and sanctimonious.

In delivering messages, perhaps Sidley/Wright will have better luck with their Politoons, a developing project that will take the commissioned storyboards of noted op-ed cartoonists and computer-animate them into 30-second spots. It's part of the larger trend, expressed over and over throughout the field, toward solid storytelling. And with the deluge of animation due by next year, it may mean the difference between what Michael Wahrman calls "the triumph of content over technology" and business as usual. ■

Michael Kurcfeld is a Los Angeles-based freelance writer.

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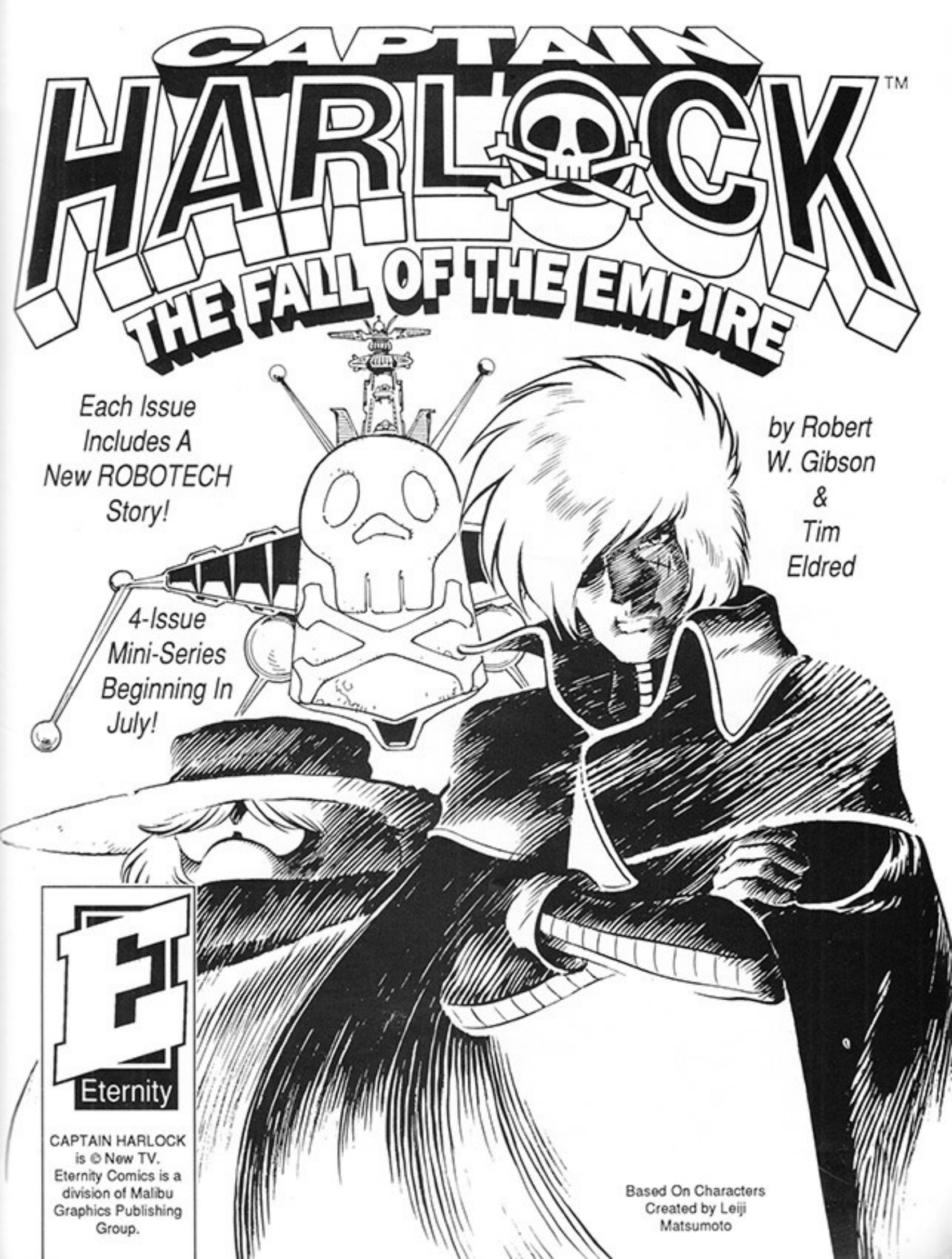

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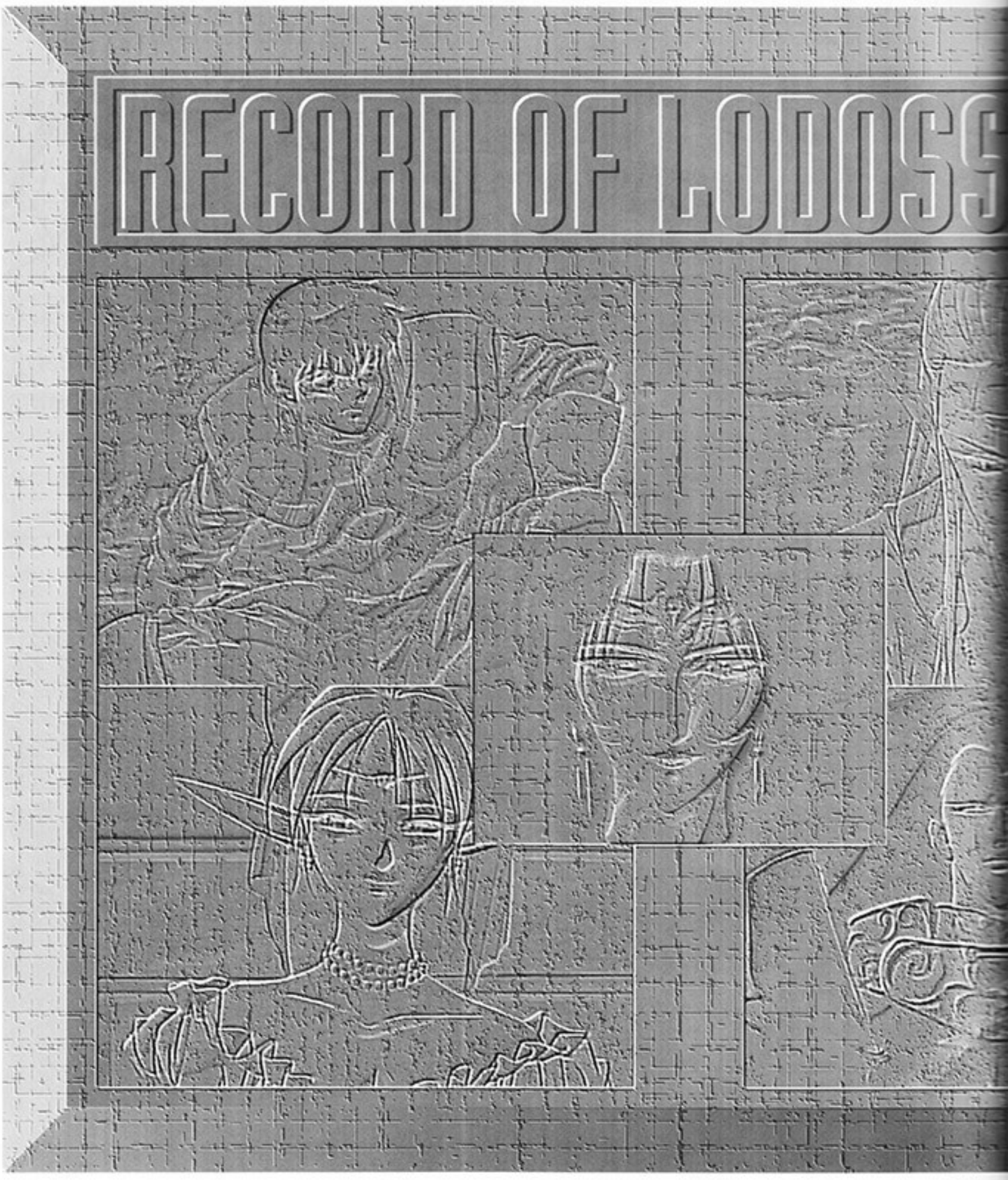

RECORD OF LODOSS

BY YOSHIYUKI KARAHASHI AND ALBERT WANG

The JAPANESE NOVEL *RECORD OF Lodoss War* begins with the words, "There is an island called Lodoss...many call it the cursed island." But the only thing the *Record of Lodoss War* saga seems to be cursed with is success. In addition to introducing thousands of Japanese fans to the art of role-playing, the story of Lodoss War has spawned a novel series, a computer game, and now, an OAV series released by Kadokawa.

Record of Lodoss War's humble beginning gave no indication that the story would ever achieve such notable popularity. The story and characters began as the fantasies of a bored young man in high school, Ryo Mizuno, who recorded his work over the years in bits and pieces. But the saga remained Mizuno's private distraction until he joined an organization of fellow gamers who called themselves "Group SNE."

In addition to more usual sports such as computer games, board games, pachinko, billiards, and horse racing, Group SNE was interested in a peculiarly American hobby: role-playing. At the time, role-playing games were almost unknown in Japan and there were few RPG (role-playing game) systems available. Drawing on his high school days, Mizuno created scenarios for his role-playing group to explore.

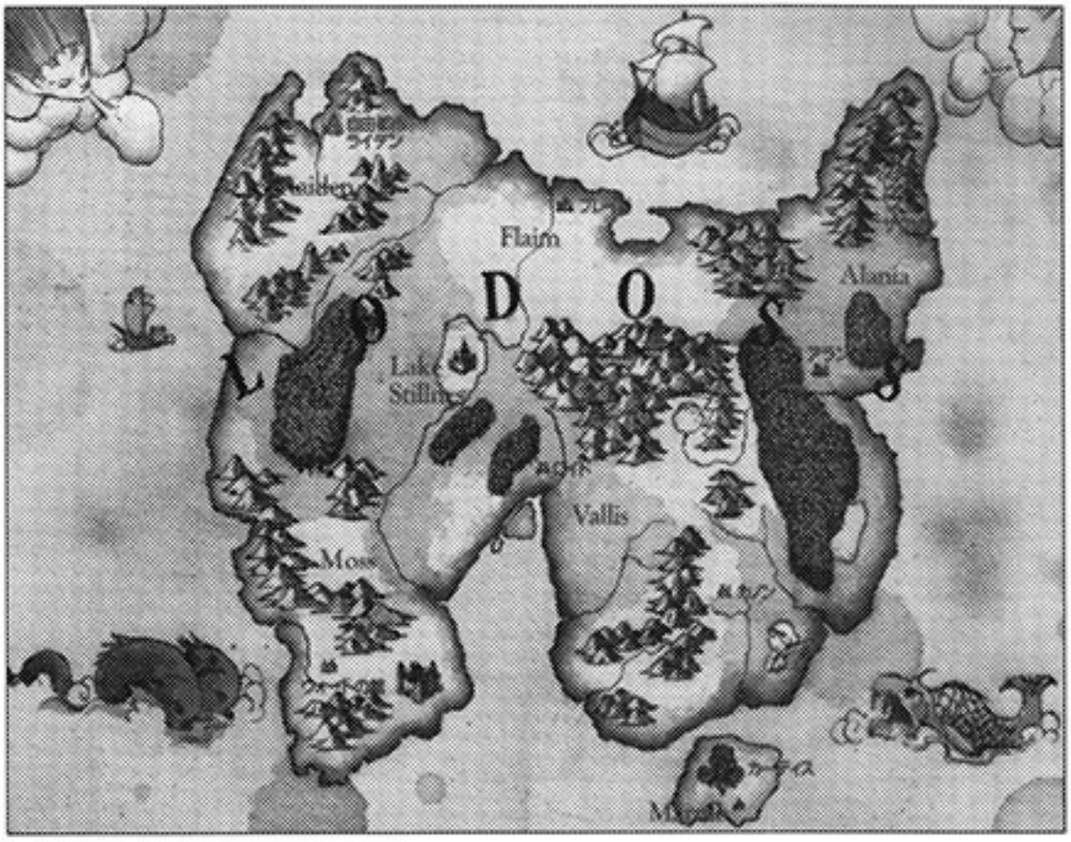
Soon, *Record of Lodoss War* became the group's largest, most popular scenario and Group SNE wound up creating their own RPG system to play the game more extensively. Finally, in 1986, Group SNE and the 23-year-old Mizuno used *Record of Lodoss War* to introduce the role-playing concept in one of Kadokawa Shoten's monthly magazines, *Computeek*. The story quickly became popular and commercial success soon followed: a commercial RPG system, a novel and manga series, computer games and a 13-volume OAV series have all resulted from Mizuno's idle high school days.

In a way, *Record of Lodoss War*'s success isn't surprising: many of its elements are strikingly similar to TSR's classic *Dungeons and Dragons*™. *Dungeons and Dragons*'™ unofficial influence can especially be seen in the occupations of the story's main characters: warrior, wizard, dwarf, elf, thief, and cleric.

The *Record of Lodoss War* OAVs use Mizuno's original stories, as published in the Kadokawa Shoten novels, as their base. Since the novels were based on the results of actual Group SNE RPG sessions, the OAV series reflects the spontaneous, interactive feel of a role-playing session. However, *Record of Lodoss War* shouldn't be seen just as an animated role-playing game. As director Nagaoka says, "In animating this story, we must be careful not to unfold it like a game... It cannot be pure fantasy; the story must be realistic within its world."

Viewers may be a little confused about the flow of the story in the OAVs since episode one is a "teaser" episode, designed to suck viewers into the story by dropping them in the middle of it. The chronological sequence of the saga actually begins with episode two.

Those familiar with the novel series might be surprised to learn that not all of the novels' stories are contained in the OAV series. While OAV episodes 1-8 cover the first novel in the *Record of Lodoss War* novel series, *The Grey Witch*, episodes 9-13 (which focus on how Beld's dreams of conquering Lodoss are carried on by Ashram and Bugnard, who attempt to resurrect



THE WORLD OF *LODOSS WARS*

The island of Lodoss is ruled by the swords of mighty warriors. Many great battles have raged over the land, but still there is no peace. Five hundred years ago the great kingdom of magic fell, and only thirty years has passed since the heroes Farn and Beld fought the famed battle against the Daemon God.

An ancient legend tells of the clash between the gods of light and the gods of darkness, a battle that ended in the deaths of the evil goddess Cardis and the earth goddess Marpha. With her dying breath, Cardis cursed the land with her dark aura. But to protect the earth, Marpha split the cursed land from the bulk and created the island of Lodoss.

Cardis died on Marmo Island, and her evil spirit attracts many vile creatures. But Marpha died in Lodoss, and her powers protect the land there even in death.

In the southwest part of Lodoss is the Moss Kingdom, ruled by the Dragon Knights and their fiery dragons.

King Farn, appointed by the Church of Fallis, reigns over the Holy Valis Kingdom in the center of the island. Valis is ruled according to the laws of the deity of the island: Fallis, the great god of light.

the evil Goddess Cardis) are derived from volumes 6 and 7 of the novels.

Fans of the animated series may be interested to know what unanimated events transpired between OAV episodes 8 and 9. To summarize: Volume 2 of the novel series, *The Daemon God of Fire*, is the story of Parn and King Kashew fighting against the barbarians and their ally, a spirit of fire. Volumes 3 and 4, *Evil Dragon of Fire Dragon Mountain*, tell of Ashram's search for a powerful magical item to help him conquer Lodoss and of how Parn and Kashew try to stop him. Volume 5, *Sacred Wars of the Kings*, contains the stories of the three destined to become the kings of Moss, Valis, and Kanon, and of how Parn witnesses their battles. Volumes 6 and 7, *Holy Knight of Lodoss*, describe Bugnard's attempt to resurrect Cardis and tell of the final battle against the forces of evil.

The *Record of Lodoss Wars* OAV series is directed by Akinori Nagaoka, with art direction by Hidetoshi Kaneko (*Five Star Stories*). The character designs, by Nobuteru Yuki (*Five Star Stories*), are based on Yutaka Izubuchi's (*Mobile Police Patlabor*) illustrations for the novels. Kadokawa began releasing the 30-minute OAVs in the summer of 1990; laserdiscs (with two episodes per disk) have been released trimonthly since November 1990.

R

Parn
The Warrior
The brave, loyal and idealistic Parn has two wishes: to become a Holy Knight of Valis like his father, and to improve the lives of those who live on the island of Lodoss. His father's mysterious death in the line of duty deters him not at all. Despite his enthusiasm, his impatience and inexperience sometimes lead him into dangerous situations that a calmer head might avoid.

Deedlit
The Elf
A brash, curious young elfin girl, Deedlit's innocent crush on Parn is the reason she follows him through thick and thin. Her good-natured, perky personality is often a comfort to the other members of the group, although Gim thinks that all elves are flighty and unreliable. She has an elfin ability to call on the spirits of wind and water.

CORD OF CHARACTERS

Eto
The Priest
A childhood friend of Parn's, this young man's training to become a priest of Fallis gives him the ability to use holy magic. But Eto has hidden skills as well—he becomes the King of Valis after Farn's death.

Gim
The Dwarf
An excellent fighter and craftsman, Gim draws upon years of fighting experience to teach the raw young Parn the skills of battle. Gim's main reason for joining Parn's quest is his promise to the priestess Nice that he will find her missing daughter, Leilia.

Woodchuck
The Thief
Woodchuck is something of a bumbler; he craves fame and fortune, but doesn't want to work particularly hard to get them. Ambitious, with a carefree and perennially optimistic personality, Woodchuck cannot help envying Parn's fame—something a thief will never get.

Slayn
The Wizard
One of the dwarf Gim's dearest friends, Slayn's magical powers are a great help to Parn in his quest. But Slayn's biggest contributions are his experience and calm, cool personality—two things that Parn lacks.

Farn
King of Fallis
Farn is a devout worshipper of Fallis, whose teachings are characterized by strict rules of conduct and chivalry. Although he is unflinching in his duty to his people, he regrets that he must face Beld, one of his dearest friends, to stop the conflict tearing Lodoss apart.

Wort
The Great Sage
A crusty, stubborn old man with a great store of knowledge, in his youth Wort faced the Daemon God with allies Beld, Farn, Nice and Karla. But now, Wort lives in isolation on a remote mountain and refuses to involve himself in the dirty, ugly, messy battles of mere mortals.

Leilia
Leilia, daughter of Nice, followed Marpha's teachings until Karla the Grey Witch stole her body seven years ago.

Nice
The High Priestess
One of the seven heroes who fought the Daemon God, Nice now serves as the High Priestess at Marpha the Earth Goddess' shrine. Her one worry is for her daughter, Leilia, who has been missing for seven years.

Karla
The Grey Witch
Karla, the Grey Witch, is 500 years old—old enough to see the ancient kingdom of magic destroyed by "barbarians." Vowing that this would never happen again, she has been secretly manipulating events and controlling history for centuries. She will not allow Lodoss to be ruled by one power, be it good or evil; this ambiguity was her sole reason for joining the battle against the Daemon God thirty years ago. While her original body has been dead for 500 years, her spirit lives in a magical artifact and is able to "steal" and animate other, living bodies.

Beld
The Dark Emperor
Beld lost his soul to the darkness when he battled the Daemon God thirty years ago with allies Nice, Farn, Wort and Karla. Now he is the Dark Emperor, ruler of the cursed island of Marmo, and he plots in his twisted soul to overcome the island of Lodoss as well.

Kashew
King of Flaim
Once a mercenary, Kashew's bravery, nobility, and worthy spirit made him King of the Flaim kingdom. When Beld attempts to conquer Lodoss, Kashew sides with King Farn to stop the Dark Emperor. A friendly, courteous man, Kashew takes an interest in Parn and has great hopes for him.

Ashram
The Dark Knight
Leader of Beld's Knights, Ashram is a mighty warrior with no pity or mercy for the weak. He is devoted to Beld, who trusts him implicitly.

Bugnard
The Dark Wizard
Beld's court wizard, Bugnard's ruthless and conniving personality has earned him the nickname "Dark Wizard." Loyal to Beld and his ambitions, what Bugnard most wants is to resurrect Kardis, the Goddess of Chaos, and twist her powers to his bidding.

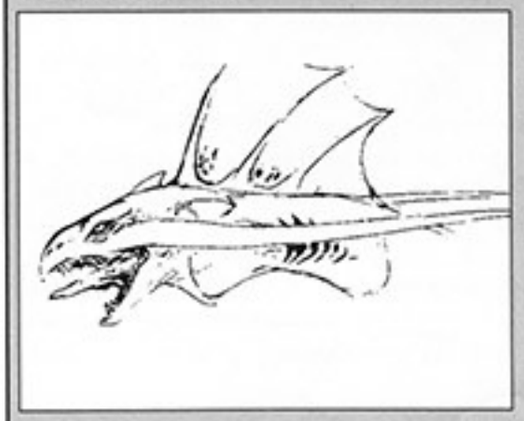
Kobolds
The wolf-headed Kobolds constitute the bulk of the low-ranking soldiers in the Marmo military. Kobolds are quick, deft and like to fight in packs, using primarily swords and spears. These creatures speak their own unique language.

Goblins
Goblins are dirty, rugged creatures with small heads, hairy bodies, big hands and feet, and a limited intelligence. The pawns of evil, goblins are led by dark elves and fight alongside ogres and kobolds in battle. They wield short swords and axes in combat. Their armor is very rough, often consisting of whatever scraps they can scrape together with a minimum of shaping and working. While the goblins in Marmo's military wear uniforms and look a little more civilized than normal goblins, they are still rough and dirty.

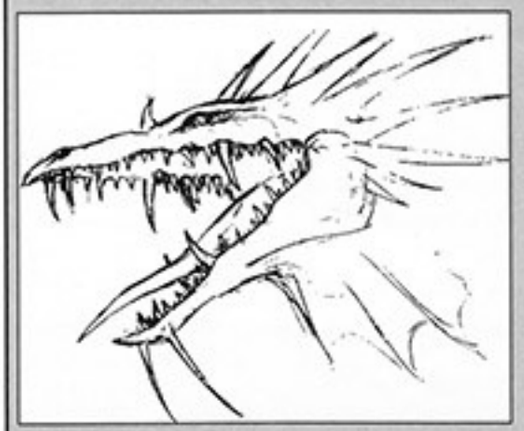
The Curse of the Five Dragons

When the land of magic was destroyed 500 years ago, the wizard Duke Salbarn divided a number of potent magical items among five dragons that he had subjugated with his sorcery: Eibra, Nas, Baramudo, Shooting Star, and Maisen. While three of the dragons have managed to evade the curse, the magical injunction still haunts Shooting Star and Eibra and forces them to protect the treasures at all costs.

Eibra
Dragon of Water
Eibra lives off the shore of the free city of Raiden. A evil, fire-breathing water dragon, Eibra swims by winding from side to side like a water snake. Like a lizard's, Eibra's eyes have only a thin, transparent membrane to protect them. Eibra possesses the Crystal Ball of Souls, which can return a dead spirit to its body.

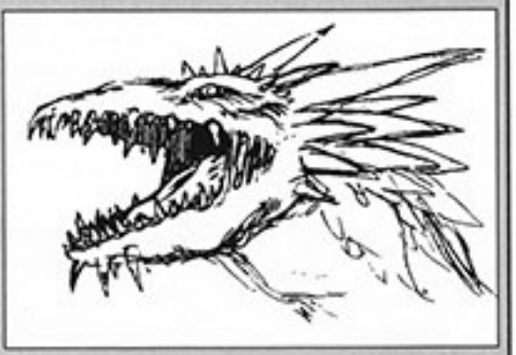


Nas
Dragon of Blackness
Black-scaled, bat-winged Nas lives on the dark island of Marmo and can breathe fire and lightening. Nas eventually joins Bugnard and becomes a sentry against those who might try to stop the revival of the evil Goddess Kardis. Nas guards the Ferronniere of Knowledge, said to contain all the wisdom of ages past.



Buramudo
Dragon of Ice
Devoted to the priestess Nice since she released it from Duke Salbarn's curse, the fire-breathing Buramudo lives on White Dragon Mountain in the northeastern part of Lodoss Island near the village of Zaxxon. This beautiful ice-scaled creature protects the Mirror of Truth, which will answer any question the owner asks.

Shooting Star
Dragon of Fire
Shooting Star, a violent, fire-breathing man-eater, lives in the lava in the heart of Fire Dragon Mountain on the border of Flaim and Raiden. When Shooting Star begins preying on the people of Flaim, King Kashew and Parn are forced to confront him. Shooting Star's Staff of Control, which gives its owner control of any living entity, makes the dragon a target of Ashram and Bugnard's evil attentions.



Maisen
Dragon of Gold
Maisen helped King Maisen unify the country of Moss, located in the southwestern part of Lodoss Island, and now lives in the nearby mountain range. After King Maisen's death, the gold dragon inherited his name and now acts as the country's protector. Maisen is dedicated to the battle against the forces of evil on Lodoss. His treasure is the Staff of Life, which can heal any injury but death.

Viewers unfamiliar with the *Record of Lodoss War* novels may be puzzled by events in the OAVs, since the animated series sometimes assumes that the viewers have read and are familiar with the history of Lodoss War given in the novels. The battle between Farn and Beld over the island of Lodoss takes place against a backdrop that is not explored in the OAV series but fully explained in the novels.

The novel series explains that Farn and Beld, along with the wizard Wort and the priestess Nice, were two of the seven heroes who fought the battle against the Daemon God "thirty years ago." During the battle, Beld takes the cursed sword SoulCrusher—an evil blade that helps him conquer the island of Marmo and aids his quest to become the Dark Emperor of Lodoss. When Farn and Beld finally clash over the island of Lodoss, their conflict is given a poignant twist if the viewer is aware that the two were once close allies in the fight for good.

A poem recorded in *Record of Lodoss War* describes both the battle against the Daemon God and partially explains why Farn and Beld must fight each other despite a mutual wish for a unified Island of Lodoss.

A grievous error freed the monsters from the the darkness.
The world was concealed in darkness, people died in the darkness, kingdoms vanished.
But light gathered to fight the darkness.
People stood up with swords in hand.
From the shining depth of the forest, Elves stood up with bows.
Dwarves stood up, with axes in their earth-digging hands.
The light became the sun of hope.
The sun ripped the darkness, and was victorious—in the forest, in the mountains, in the plains, and in the seas and sky.
The creatures of darkness fled to their caves.
That was the sacred place of the beasts, the world's deepest dungeon.
The door to the other world was located in its depths.
The king of the Daemons sat at his throne, raised his right hand, and sent his curses upon the world.
One hundred chosen heroes challenged the dark and deadly dungeon.
Many of the heroes fought against the darkness in the land of darkness, and became cold corpses.
But still the light shone through the blackest pit.
Seven heroes challenged the Daemon—six survived, and the world was saved.
One was a knight—he wore white armor, with a holy sword in his hand—the King of Varis, Farn.
One was a warrior—he struck down the Daemon, but his spirit was stolen by it—the Dark Emperor Beld.
One was a dwarf—the last king of the lost Kingdom of Stone—Frepe.
One was a wizard—he had the wisdom of the world—the Great Sage Wort.
One was a priestess—protecting the laws of the earth, the priestess of the pure Marpha—Nice.
And the last—a quiet wizard, a fighter, a saint of light who left without telling his name.
And so the light returned and the darkness fled.

To the north of Valis is the desert kingdom of Flaim, a country recently built by the "mercenary" king Kashew.

The Kingdom of Alania lies to the northeast. The oldest kingdom on Lodoss, Alania is the site of an enormous temple dedicated to the earth goddess Marpha.

In the southeast is Kannon, a country rich in both culture and wealth.

To the south of Kannon is Marmo, the dark island. Populated by evil monsters and escaped criminals, this small island was a chaotic place until the warrior Beld united the small island with his sword and proclaimed himself emperor.

EPISODES 1—8

The OAV series begins in the middle of the story, as Parn the warrior, Deedlit the elf, Gim the dwarf, Eto the priest, Slayn the magician and Woodchuck the thief undertake a journey at the request of King Farn of the Holy Valis Kingdom. Their quest: to ask the great sage Wort about the mysterious Grey Witch, Karla.

But the quest is not as simple as it appears, and many dangers lie in the companions' path. As they venture through the ruins of the stone kingdom of the dwarves, the party is assaulted by gargoyles and dragons.

Wort is visited by the Grey Witch herself. "The balance of history is stable only if it shakes a little," Karla says, telling Wort that she only wants to talk with the young adventurers and that she and Wort should wait for them to arrive. Parn and his party somehow manage to get through the ruins and continue on their journey.

But the quest really began a few weeks before, when Gim promised the good sorceress Nice that he would find her abducted daughter Leilia. Gim begins his journey by visiting his friend Slayn, a wizard in the small vil-

lage of Zaxxon. When the village is attacked by goblins, Gim joins villagers Parn, Eto and Slayn to successfully defeat the brutes.

After the battle, Parn decides to embark on a great adventure and train himself to become like his father, a brave knight of Valis. But he will not go on his journey alone; his childhood friend Eto is the first to decide to accompany him. Gim joins the quest with a dual goal: to help the young warrior and to find the abducted Leilia. Slayn is the next to join the party, deciding to help his dwarvish friend and aid the brave but inexperienced Parn in his quest. As Parn and the others voyage to the capital of Alania, they are joined by Deedlit the elf and Woodchuck the thief.

Meanwhile, Marmo's Dark Emperor, Beld, reveals his plans to conquer Lodoss to his Bugnard, his court magician, and to the commander of the Marmo knights, Ashram. Suddenly, Karla the Grey Witch appears and offers her aid. Despite Bugnard and Ashram's doubts, Beld accepts her offer.

Beld's military offense begins. Beld and Bugnard lead the attack against Kanon while Ashram, aided by Karla's powerful magic, leads the attack against Alania. The defenses of these two kingdoms are no match for Beld and soon fall to his rule.

King Farn of Valis, unaware that Alania has fallen to Beld, sends his daughter as ambassador to Alania to forge a treaty to resist the Dark Emperor. Karla captures the princess on her journey and it is only by chance that Parn's group happens upon them and manages to free the princess.

The group escorts the princess back to Valis and are profusely thanked by the grateful King Farn. There the groups learns that King Kashew of Flaim has pledged his alliance with Farn to fight against Beld.

Beld, after his success in Kanon and Alania, now turns his army against his old friend King Farn. His invasion of Valis begins the mighty struggle between two of the greatest

"The balance of history is stable only if it shakes a little..."

heroes of the island, one-time allies who bonded together to defeat the Daemon God thirty years ago. Parn and his friends, witness to the battle of the heroes, decide to join the clash.

As soldiers meet and die in battle, Parn hears Wort's voice. It seems that Karla, the Grey Witch, is behind this futile feud. Wort explains that Karla has survived for 500 years by taking over other people's bodies. For years, she has been controlling the course of history so that neither the forces of good nor evil, black nor white, could triumph over the other. This ambiguous stand is what earned her the title "Grey Witch."

As the battle nears its end, Farn and Beld finally confront each other face to face, swords in hand. After an intense battle, Beld deals Farn a killing blow. But Beld's victory is cut short when a spear shoots from nowhere, impaling him by his rival's side.

Parn, disgusted and angry, cannot help despising the way Karla manipulated the two heroes like pawns in order to keep Lodoss in a "grey state:" a state of war. But Gim has realized something shocking: Karla is actually Leilia, Nice's missing daughter. Karla has been using Leilia's body for the last seven years!

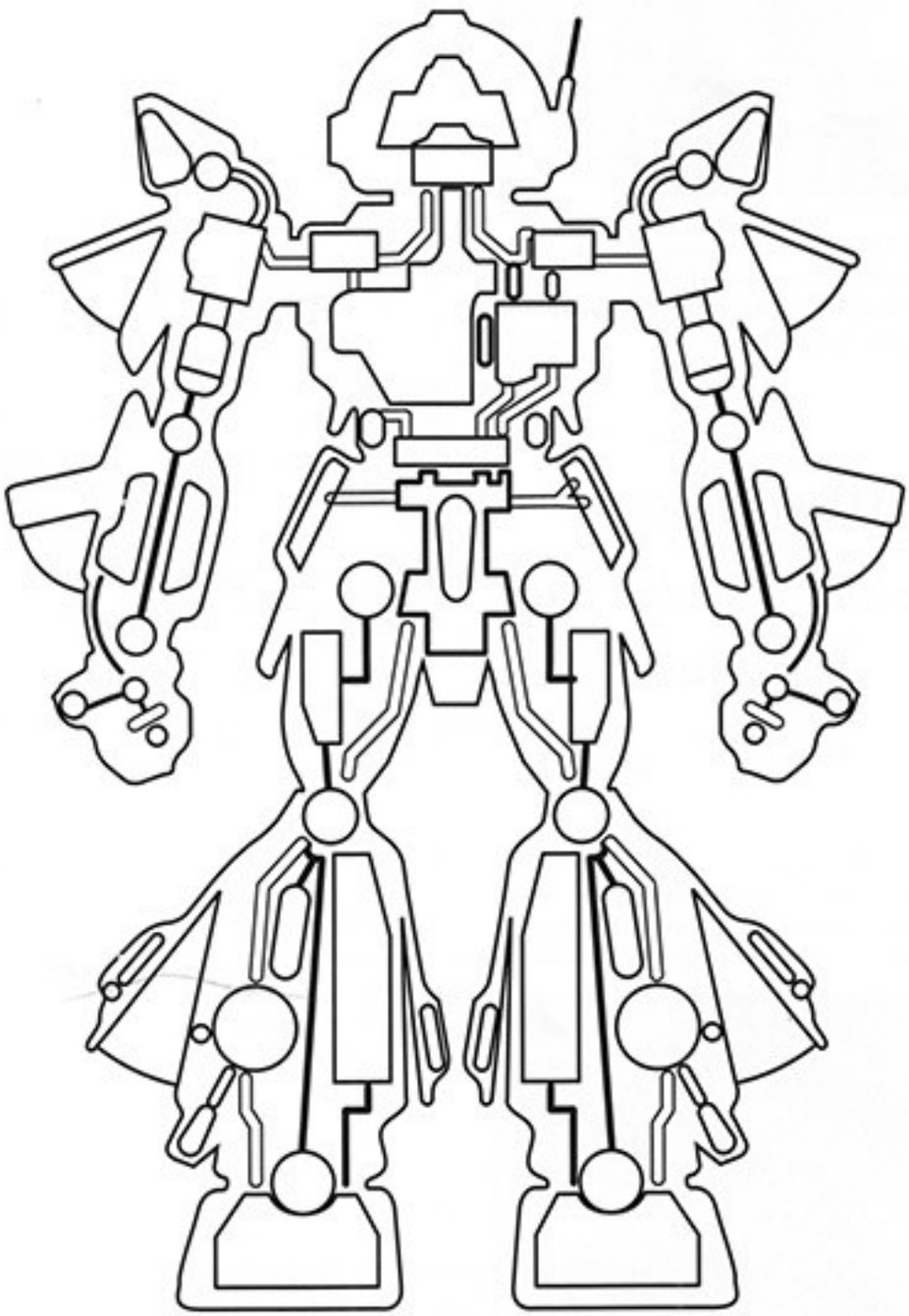
Furious, the group confronts the Witch. Woodchuck cannot help but covet Karla's magic as Gim tries to pry the ancient sorceress out of Leilia's body. Finally Karla is forced to discard the young girl's form, but at the cost of Gim's life and Woodchuck's mind. Karla, now inhabiting Woodchuck's frame, vanishes—leaving Parn, Slayn, Eto, Deedlit, and Leilia to mourn their dead and plan future action against the Grey Witch. ■

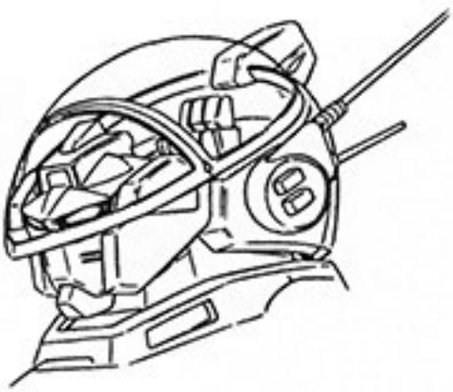
MECHA FILE

A Continuing Series on the Mechanics and Robots of Japanese Animation

The Development of the Super Powered Tracer

BY JAMES TEAL





➤ History

Gurados began the development of the Super-Powered Tracer (SPT) over 100 years before their planned invasion of Earth. Large enough for construction purposes yet small enough to conserve precious cargo space aboard transport ships, the SPT was the ideal unit to aid the Guradosians in their quest for interstellar domination.

The SPT, able to perform both exploratory and military functions, is essentially a blend of two earlier, more primitive units: The PTS and the MS. The original exploration units, labeled Powered Trace Suits (PTS), were five-meter-tall personal space suits that utilized internal actuators to copy the movements of the pilot. This mechanism allowed the exploration of high-gravity worlds without loss of pilot reaction time. With the inclusion of an adjustable rocket motor, the PTS' mobility in space made it ideal for construction of bases and other structures.

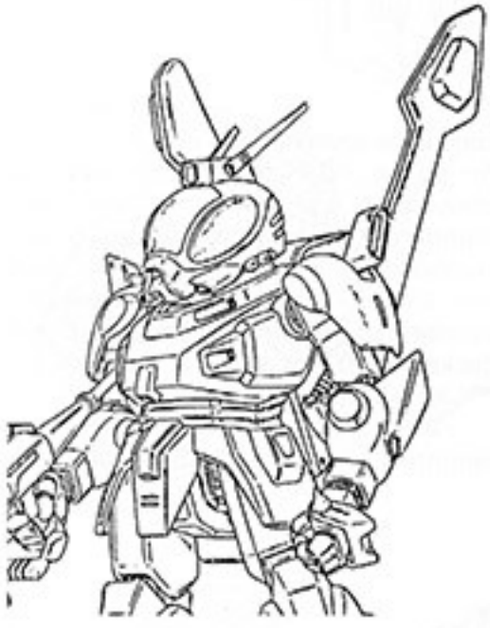
The first military units, referred to as Manipulator Suits (MS), were basically small pods with two tiny manipulators. While the MS was armed with a high-powered laser gun, it was essentially little more than a glorified cutting torch.

With only these two primitive types, the need for a more advanced unit was obvious. However, funding allowed for the development of only one kind of suit—and military won over exploratory applications. However, the SPT is still equipped with the same exploratory sensory array available in the PTS.

➤ Usage

SPTs were designed to function in four different environmental conditions: universal, space, atmospheric and ground. Marine conditions were not considered since Gurados' terrain was not conducive to development of underwater units.

The earliest of the first generation SPTs was the SPT-BV-15C Braver, a general-purpose, highly maneuverable unit that could be easily piloted by any standard soldier with minimal training. More specialized units were the SPT-DM-20C Dimarge, designed for space deployment, and the SPT-DT-25C D-tol, used for ground combat.



The "C" designation at the end of a unit's call number indicates that it is a mass-production ("common") model. Other units, usually with a higher performance and designated for officers only, are labeled "U" for "unique." Two examples of unique-class SPTs are the SPT-GK-10U Grimekaiser and the SPT-BG-91U Bullgrenn. Any unit with the designation "X"—such as the SPT-LZ-00X—is an experimental model. The letters in a unique or experimental model's name are simply an abbreviation of the unit's name—BG for Bullgrenn, DT for D-tol, and LZ for Layzner.

➤ Layout

The bipedal SPTs are equipped with multiple vernier thruster locations to aid the suit in making high speed combat maneuvers. Interchangeable backpacks are supplied for different missions. The cockpit is located in the unit's head and is covered by a hardened plexiglass canopy.

SPT power systems are primarily electrical and so the changeable backpacks hold an extra fuel reserves. The electrical system, which draws power from batteries in the SPT's torso, handles all movement systems, sensory array and weapons. The batteries are periodically recharged by power generators in the suit's legs.

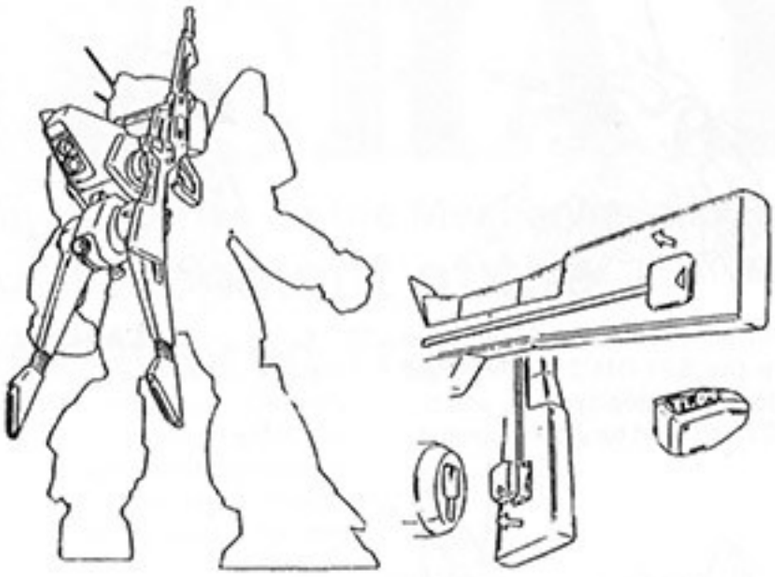
Electrical wiring and lubricant cables, similar in design to the human nervous system, run throughout the SPT's body. Locomotion is produced from a combination of high-power actuators for slow movements and low-power pulse motors for quick motions. In the case of combat damage, the entire body of the SPT is filled with multiple, overlapping backup systems.

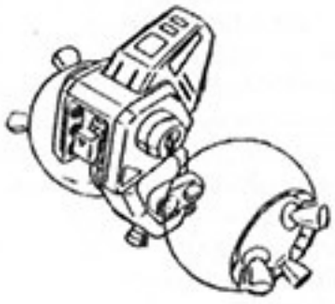
➤ Backpack System

Although most backpacks allow an SPT to escape the atmosphere of any planet of approximately 1 g, orbit break is usually performed via shuttle since individual liftoff consumes an enormous amount of fuel. Since SPTs are deployed on a wide variety of missions, Gurados tripod carriers sometimes carry up to four extra backpacks for the SPTs. In addition to storehousing extra power, backpacks are capable of storing various weapons on their double mounting racks.

While each SPT can operate in all terrain situations, most SPTs are designed for and work best in a specific environment. The backpack system (BPS) aids in this selection. Backpacks, like the SPTs, are labeled according to their type and function.

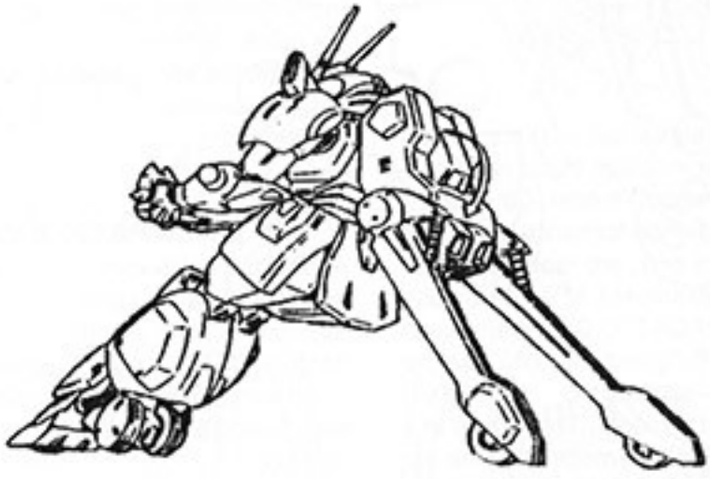
The first two letters of a backpack unit



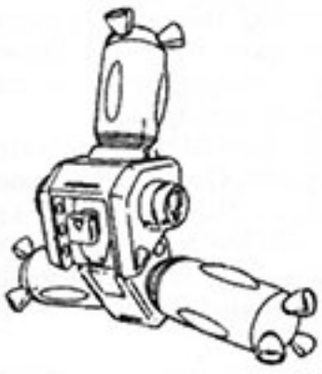


denote the environmental design-type: "SP" for space, "GR" for ground, "AR" for atmosphere and "UV" for universal. Any numbers generally correspond to the number of the SPT for which the backpack was designed. The last letter indicates the number of primary thrusters in the backpack: "D" for dual, "T" for triple and "Q" for quadruple.

The Braver, a general-purpose unit, is equipped with a UV-15T backpack. The



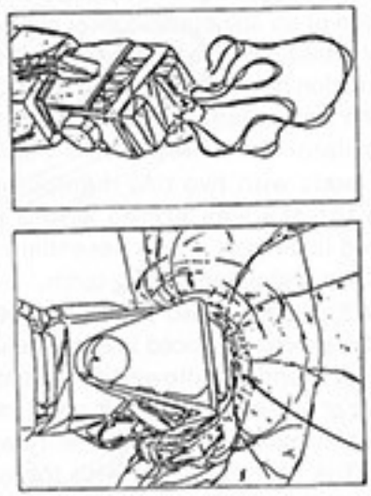
Dimarge, with its high-output SP-20D backpack, was at one time the fastest SPT, while the D-Tol, designed with a GR-25Q backpack for ground usage, is incredibly maneuverable on land. The Grimekaiser has a UV-10T universal backpack, and the Bullgrenn is equipped with a standard AR-90T atmospheric-usage pack. The Layzner uses the UV-00D backpack.



➤ Weapons

The SPT's primary weapon is a proton laser cannon called a "lasered rifle." In space, with no atmospheric diffusion, the standard rifle can punch through 100 mm of SPT armor with no difficulty—one reason why most SPT armor is an average of 120 mm thick. Since the SPT is humanoid in layout, the suit carries its weapons much as a man would. However, the lasered rifle's main targeting scope is projected onto the pilot's helmet visor.

Most lasered rifles draw their power from a battery pack cartridge or "clip," although the rifle can draw power directly from the main generator. Power output on the rifle can be adjusted from seven power levels as well as from rapid to scatter-fire.

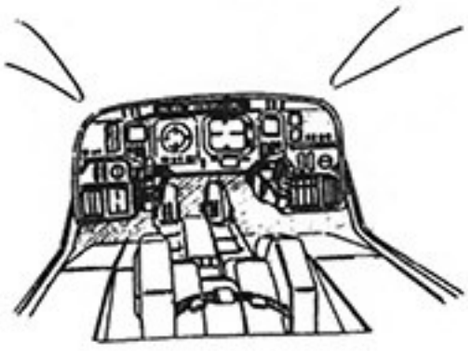


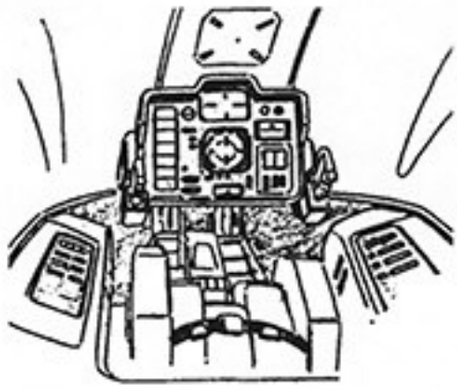
The most common secondary weapon is the "knuckle shot," which destroys targets by utilizing a strong electromagnetic field. This weapon bypasses the SPT's amazingly durable armor and goes straight for the internal mechanisms—it's high electrical output can wreak havoc upon an enemy's internal electrical systems. Fittingly, the knuckle shot was originally designed for removing obstacles.

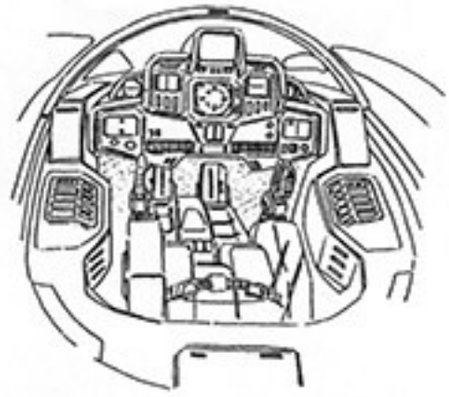
Some SPTs carry limited-range missiles with a range of three to five kilometers. These powerful yet imprecise missiles are primarily used for wide-scale destruction, and are directed by a computer-guidance system.

➤ Armor

SPT armor is made of a special titanium alloy treated with an anti-laser heat dispersion coating. The most vulnerable spots and the areas most likely to be targeted are covered with magnetic-repulsion active armor, elec-







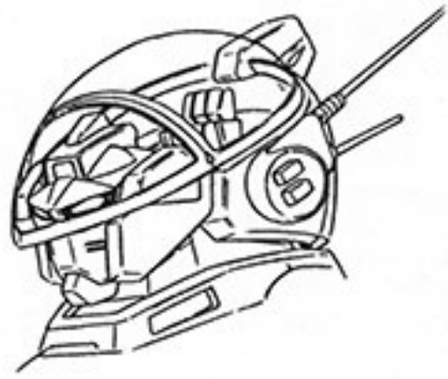
tromagnetically polarized to harden the armor's surface and increase its resistance to impact-based attacks. Unfortunately, these defenses provide little protection against high-electron penetration assaults such the knuckle shot. And since the armor's power is connected to the rest of the unit, when the fuel runs out the SPT is effectively unprotected and extremely vulnerable.

➤ Sensory Array

Since space and planetary exploration were among the original parameters of SPT design, SPTs are equipped with a plethora of sensors. These sensors, restricted to a very short range, are highly sensitive and present the unit's computer with enough information to minutely analyze any situation.

The SPTs total count of sensory systems is well over twenty, including active and passive radar, infrared, laser radar, electronic, photoelectric, and atmospheric analysis, sound, sonar and others. All of this input is controlled, collected and collated by the unit's computer and relayed via a synthesized voice to the pilot.

Radar and infrared sensors are used primarily for motion detection while combat sensors are employed during ground and air confrontations. Laser sensors are used for long-range tracking and to detect enemy-laser lock–on, while the electrical sensors detect electrical emissions from SPTs and other sources. Infrared systems can also give thermographic displays. For detection of vibrations and other movements in the vacuum of space, the sensors are measured in negative decibels.



➤ Computer

Much of the control of an SPT is performed by computer, which constantly functions to maintain unit integrity, repair and control damage, and provide tactical advice. With the aid of a SPT computer, even first-time pilots can perform many maneuvers in a combat situation. After a short lecture, any novice can get in an SPT, turn on the power and simply give the computer instructions to carry out basic maneuvers. The computer will instruct the pilot on any manual control necessary. However, because combat decisions must all be made by the pilot, novices will usually have much slower response times; however, this can be overcome by simply transferring all manual control to voice command.

Since the computer handles many calculations simultaneously, the pilots are able to change the hierarchy of priorities. The computer's standard operating procedure, in order of importance, is to 1) carry out the pilot's instructions, 2) protect the pilot's life, and 3) protect the SPT. Whenever the pilot or SPT is in danger, the computer will offer new courses of action to protect both.

➤ Military Efficiency

Due to the SPT's military function, all units are equipped with a "black box" to retain an accurate record of information gained during missions. These devices are often removed and used during mission briefings. The SPT, with it's almost unlimited adaptability, has proved itself an invaluable tool in pursuit of the Guradosian goal of interplanetary conquest. ■

WALKER MACHINE XABUNGLE

With it's alternative universe and antiquated mecha designs, Xabungle may be the most obscure mecha show in the history of the genre

BY MARK SIMMONS

A HEROIC ADVENTURE, A social commentary, a romance and a slapstick comedy, *Walker Machine Xabungle* is one of the most truly creative and original animation series ever released. Paradoxically (some might say typically), it is almost entirely unknown in the States.

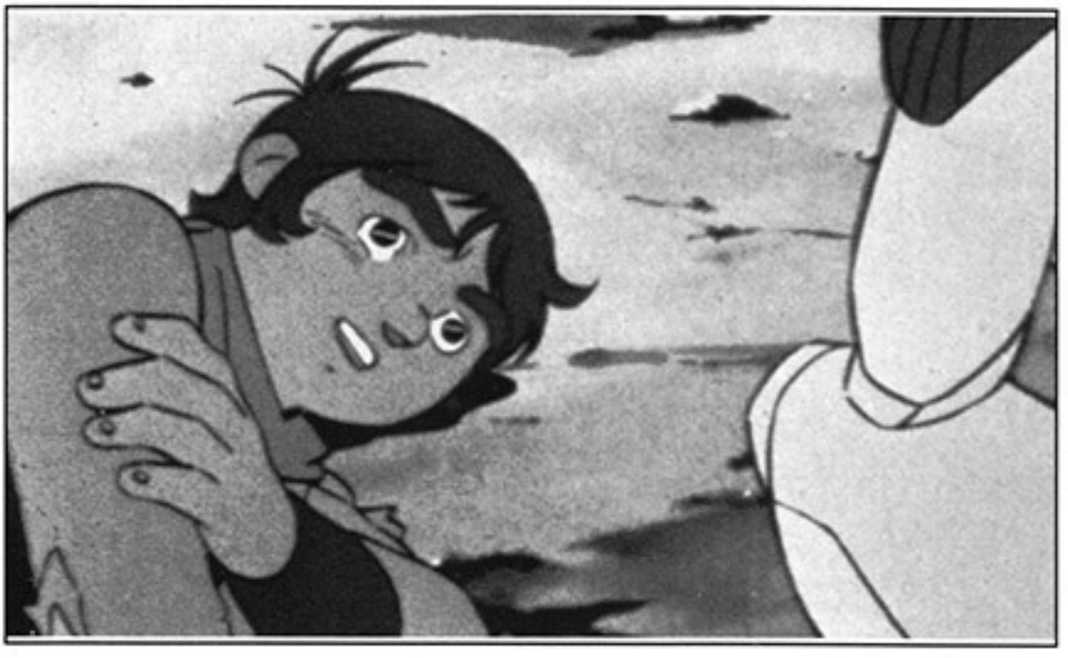
The main reason for this oversight is that *Xabungle* simply never made the transfer from Japan to America. It aired in Japan before specialty stores in America carried a large selection of Japanese animation, and when anime finally became widely available the relatively obscure *Xabungle* was buried by megahits such as *Gundam* and *Macross.*

A far cry from the stereotypical grim war epic, *Xabungle* departs completely from the usual mecha format. For example, while most mecha shows feature glossy, hyper-technological machinery, *Xabungle*'s "walker machines" run on gasoline and sport World War II army surplus anti-aircraft guns. And while most other mecha series depict a high-tech, extremely Westernized vision of the future, *Xabungle* invents a completely alternate, amazingly detailed future world.

The series takes place in a bizarre Wild West-style frontier where sleazy hired guns, travelling merchants and goggle-equipped miners act out a tale of civil rebellion and indiscriminate obsession. The story revolves around a young man named Jiron, who is on a quest for revenge on the man who killed his parents and the government that let him get away with it.

Far from a flop in Japan, *Xabungle* was part of the early 80's-era run of Nippon Sunrise mecha epics that produced such mecha classics as *Sun Fang Dougram, Armored Trooper Votoms* and *Aura Battler Dunbine.* It ran for a respectable 50 episodes from February 1982 to January 1983.

The series, created by some of the best artists in the business, was written by the ubiquitous Yoshiyuki Tomino, creator of *Gundam* and writer of a half-dozen other mecha epics. In addition, the series featured character designs by Tomonori Kagawa (*Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross* and *Aura Battler Dunbine*) and mechanical designs by the stalwart Kunio Okawara (*Votoms, Gundam, Dougram*). While Tomino and Kagawa were to bring any number of glum, serious adventure stories to the small screen in the next few years, *Xabungle* proves that their talents can be put to the service of comedy as well as drama.



"I WANT THAT XABUNGLE!" EPISODES 1-7

Jiron Amos, lying injured and unconscious in the wilderness, wakes to the curious eyes of a bandit gang, the Sandrats, as they pursue and bring down a lone Dugger-type walker machine (WM). He tells them that he is on his way to transport merchant Carrying Cargo's travelling bazaar and that he wants to "acquire" a WM. Lagu Uralo, the leader of the Sandrats, agrees to escort him to the bazaar and they set off for town.

At the bazaar, Carrying Cargo is showing off his latest acquisitions: the transforming Landship *Iron Gear* and two Xabungle-type WM. One look at the Xabungle and Jiron must have it. That night, the Sandrats lure Cargo's breakers away, allowing Jiron to make off with the coveted machine. Kid Horra, the leader of Cargo's breakers, catches up with the fleeing Jiron and finds to his surprise that he is no match for the boy and his stolen Xabungle. Finally, Cargo's daughter Eruchi and her bodyguard Fattman Big succeed in capturing the thief.

Eruchi, tired of the mundane lifestyle of a bourgeois transport merchant, decides to release Jiron for her own amusement. But the stubborn youth doesn't get far before running afoul of Horra's breakers once again. Deeply disappointed at finding Jiron lying unconscious in the desert, Eruchi contemptuously leaves him to his fate.

Undaunted, Jiron struggles back to town on a very unstable one-wheeled motorcycle and rejoins the Sandrats. This time, they succeed in hijacking the Xabungle.

Two days pass, and Carrying Cargo becomes desperate. Under Innocent's three-day rule, if Jiron manages to elude capture for another day then the Xabungle is legally his. Horra persuades the merchant to post a sizable bounty for the stolen WM and sets off with a complement of breakers to find the errant youth. But the moment the breakers are out of sight, the Sandrats sneak on board to steal supplies for the Xabungle. Surprisingly, Eruchi helps them gather the equipment.

"WE ARE NOT INNOCENT'S SHEEP!" JIRON AMOS

Eager for adventure, Eruchi steals the other WM under the pretext of joining the hunt for Jiron. But in fact, Eruchi has decided to run away from home and bring culture to a Philistine planet. Fickle Eruchi's defection is yet another blow to Horra's attempt to capture the Xabungle; when the mysterious rogue breaker Timp Sharone appears, Jiron goes into a murderous frenzy and eludes capture once again.

After the battle, Jiron explains his quest to Eruchi and the Sandrats. A week ago, he says, Timp killed his parents. The others find this hilarious: quests for vengeance, like all other social and legal disputes, are subject to Innocent's three-day rule. The unlucky Jiron is four days past the time limit for obtaining revenge. Since the theft of the Xabungle is crucial to his quest, he is trying to have it both ways, applying the three-day rule only where it suits him. Stung, Jiron responds that he intends to give it back when he's done, which provokes another round of jeers.

Meanwhile, the mysterious Timp goes about his mission to bring down the Cargo family and destroy the *Iron Gear*. Joining forces with a transport merchant, Grocky, the two set a trap for the ship using the Xabungle as bait. After a brief standoff, Grocky confronts his longtime rival Carrying Cargo and, with a well-timed salvo from his Landship's cannons, knocks him from the *Iron Gear's* bridge to his death.

After Cargo's death, Horra declares himself in charge of the *Iron Gear* and tries to force Eruchi to marry him to cement his claim to leadership of the Cargo family. But when he loses a duel with Jiron, he is forced to skulk away in defeated rage.

Grieving for her father, Eruchi resigns herself to the life of a transport merchant and hires on Jiron and the Sandrats as breakers. As the Landship moves on, Grocky and Timp, who still intend to destroy the ship, are close on their heels.

Timp plans to use Grocky's ship, the *Earth Thunder*, to herd his quarry toward Bickman. Bickman, the most powerful of the transport merchants, is a favorite of Innocent's and his Landship, the huge *Dellavas Gallant*, should be more than a match for the *Iron Gear*. Unfortunately for Timp, the *Iron Gear* is more than a match for the *Earth Thunder* and Grocky and his ship are completely pulverized. Giving up on handling the mission solo, Timp contacts Innocent and notifies them that there are lawbreakers on the loose.

The *Iron Gear* crew detours to a nearby oasis for some R&R. Here they find a lush paradise with abundant plants and wildlife around a beautiful lake. The crew are quickly swept up in a feud between Hotor, the miserly rockman who created this oasis, and a local aboriginal tribe, called the Toran Toran, which craves the man's hoarded bluestone.

After the miner's death the crew puzzles over something that seems to contradict Innocent's teachings: according to Innocent, bluestone is never found near fertile land. But as this is obviously proven false by Hotor's rich stock of bluestone in this paradise, the first doubts about Innocent's wisdom begin to take root.

"I AM NOT INNOCENT! I AM JIRON AMOS!" EPISODES 8-14

Still intent on delivering the *Iron Gear* to Bickman's guns, Timp forms an alliance with the transport merchant Gavlet Gablae—or, as she insists on being addressed, Miss Gablae. Bickman promises her ownership of the Landship *Purple Cat* in return for her help.

The *Iron Gear* skirmishes repeatedly with the "old maid" and her crew of breakers with no clear winner in sight. Finally, several of Bickman's mercenaries sneak onto the ship posing as hired help and succeed in hijacking the *Iron Gear*.

While Bickman awaits Timp's signal to blast the Landship to pieces, Eruchi, Jiron, the Sandrats and several other crew members find shelter in the ship's bluestone storeroom. Reluctant to let the bluestone be destroyed along with the ship, their captors agree to trade captives for bluestone. As a bonus, they throw in the uncooperative Gavlet Gablae.

The breakers' defection allows the *Iron Gear* crew to reach their posts before Bickman's forces arrive. The *Purple Cat* is destroyed in the battle, and Gavlet, crawling toward her Landship in a crippled WM and cursing Timp's name as she goes, is killed in the crossfire.

Bereft of backup, Timp now becomes the hunted. Reckoning that he will be untouchable on "sacred ground," he takes refuge in one of Innocent's sanctuaries, the tribute city P-Point. But the single-minded Jiron tracks him to the sanctuary's boundary, rejoining the *Iron Gear* just in time to rescue it from another of Bickman's attacks.

Since it is time for Eruchi to render her transport merchant's bluestone tribute, the *Iron Gear* calmly enters P-Point. As she considers Innocent the epitome of sophistication and civilization, Eruchi is relishing the opportunity to show her boorish comrades the meaning of true culture.

While the Sandrats are duly impressed by Innocent's advanced technology and civilized ways, Jiron is only interested in finding Timp. He glimpses his archenemy in the central enclosure of the city but is chased off by a guard patrol before he can inflict any damage.

Meanwhile, Eruchi is told that her paperwork is out of order and her bluestone tribute will not be accepted. When Lagu protests, an Innocent bureaucrat has them both arrested. The Sandrats, with the police in close pursuit, run to tell Jiron of this unexpected mishap. Jiron mounts his Xabungle and sets forth to spring Lagu and Eruchi. "We are not Innocent's sheep!" he rants.

As the property damage mounts, chief administrator Bieru calls a truce. He lets the prisoners go with the minimum fine for damages, but Jiron bluntly interrupts the exchange of pleasantries to ask why Innocent is harboring a villain like Timp. The crew departs P-Point with many doubts about Innocent—all but Eruchi, who is infatuated with Bieru and the civilized atmosphere of Innocent's city.

Eruchi quickly discards her crew, ordering them to camp outside the following night, and sets the *Iron Gear* on a course back to P-Point and Bieru. Just as the dome becomes visible over the hills, the *Dellavas Gallant* rears up before her. The *Iron Gear* is forced back until the rest of the crew, running on foot and fending off hungry panthers, manages to reach the Landship. But when the *Iron Gear* crew deploys their newest weapon—a mighty photon gun, a parting gift from Bieru—they are stunned when the *Dellavas Gallant* returns fire. The duplicitous Bieru has delivered a photon gun to Bickman as well!

The *Iron Gear* immobilized by Bickman's salvo, Jiron is forced to use his Xabungle to wrench a turret loose and fire it at the enemy Landship. The *Dellavas Gallant*, hit dead center, is brutally ripped in half.

THE PLANET ZORA

The planet Zora was once Earth, though few of its inhabitants remember its ancient name. Once home to an advanced and prosperous civilization, Earth's surface was wracked by enormous seismic disturbances and the population had no choice but to flee into space.

After 250 years, Earth's crust settled and the planet became habitable again, but the tumult had wiped out most plant and animal life and lowered the water level by 3,000 meters. Continents were now huge plateaus; the only remaining open bodies of water were lakes of mud, remnants of deep sea beds.

In the difficult process of re-colonizing the Earth, now known as Zora, humanity established a world government called **Innocent** to restore the planet's environment and provide the means for the civilian population to conquer the barren soil. Over the decades, however, Innocent became corrupt and autocratic. Innocent's domed cities, called **sanctuaries**, are bursting with trees and flowers while the outside world remains a wasteland, and the government uses its monopoly on technology to keep the civilians weak and divided.

But in recent years a civilian reform movement called **Salt** has won popular support, raising doubts in the minds of Innocent's highest officials as to whether Innocent's tyrannical rule can survive the rebels' insurgent quest for victory.

HOW THE WORLD WORKS

The foundation of Zora's economy is **bluestone**, a crystalline mineral mined by **rockmen**. The rockmen exchange bluestone for finished goods whenever a **transport merchants**' bazaar rolls into town. In turn, the transport merchants use bluestone to pay tribute to Innocent in exchange for spare parts for their **land ships**, and gold for paying the mercenaries called **breakers**.

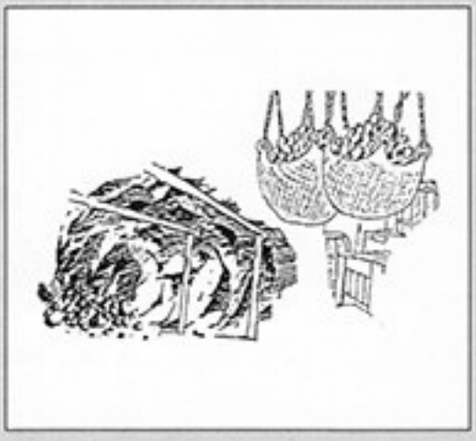
What Innocent does with the bluestone is a mystery to the general population. However, there does seem to be a suspicious connection between the rendering of tribute in bluestone and the semi-annual "ascensions of light"—actually the exhaust flares of space-bound rockets—that occur at tribute sites.

Innocent designs and produces **Walker Machines** (WM), humanoid transportation vehicles, for civilian use. Transport merchants are at the mercy of Innocent, since their land ships and certain advanced WM are assigned to their families. These assigned goods are non-transferable and can be withdrawn at any time. Although Innocent also manufactures the WM used by breakers and rockmen, these vehicles are generally privately owned.

Innocent, inside its paradise domes, prefers not to expend much energy on the outside world. The **three-day rule**—which states that any crime is forgiven after three days—is intended to keep the peace and reduce the need for arbitration. When a civilian breaks the law by destroying or stealing Innocent property, or brazenly violating the three-day rule, Innocent prefers to administer justice through civilian intermediaries instead of intervening directly.

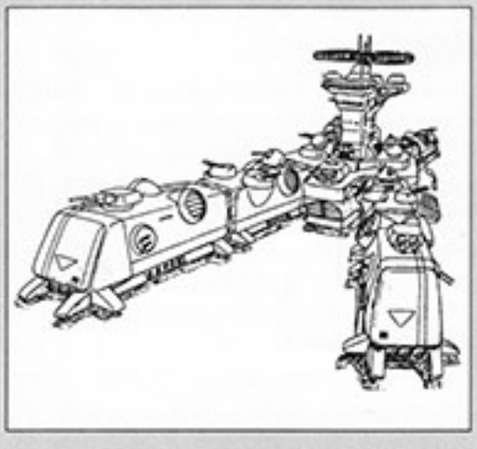
Xabungle Vocabulary and Concepts

Bluestone: A blue crystalline mineral found in dry, barren soil and the basis of Zora's economy.



Breaker: Hired mercenaries, breakers provide protection for the transport merchants' land ships. Between jobs, they often turn to banditry, preying on common farmers and rockmen, to cover maintenance costs for their WM.

Innocent: The mysterious government of Zora, Innocent is part bureaucracy and part church. Innocent's laws and philosophies are regarded as almost holy by the civilian population.



Land Ship (LS): Large armored hovercrafts used for cargo transportation, LS are produced by Innocent and assigned to specific transport merchants in return for cooperation with, and tribute to, the government.

Planet Zora: Earth's new name a few centuries after natural disaster strikes.

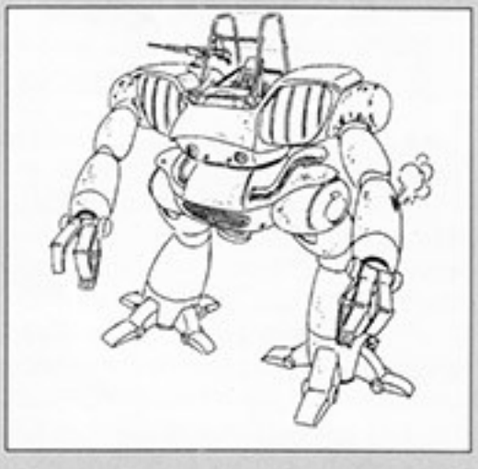
Rockman: Bluestone miners, rockmen use WM to prospect and mine for crystals. Along with farmers, rockmen constitute Zora's working class.

Salt: A civilian movement led by a man named Katakam Zushim, salt advocates the reform of Innocent.

Sanctuary: The colloquial term for Innocent's domed cities, each Sanctuary is a "Point," prefixed by a letter—"A-Point," "B-Point," etc. No civilians dare fight near a sanctuary; Innocent's punishment for damaging property is extremely harsh.

Three-day rule: Innocent's basic law governing disputes among civilians, the three-day-rule mandates that a criminal who escapes capture or revenge for 72 hours is then immune from punishment.

Transport merchant: These roving vendors travel from town to town in their land ships, setting up bazaars upon their arrival and exchanging their products for bluestone. The most powerful people in Zora's civilian society, the transport merchants owe their power to the land ships Innocent assigns them. For this reason, Innocent's agents prefer to use transport merchants to do their dirty work.



Walker machine (WM): Humanoid vehicles designed and produced by Innocent and commonly used for transportation and protection by Zora's civilians.

Jiron Amos

A county bumpkin, Jiron is a little dim. Son of renowned rockman "Iron Arm" Amos, Jiron's relentless pursuit of his parents' murderer makes him an outlaw hero in a world where the law mandates that every dispute be set aside after three days. His obsessive quest for justice makes Jiron a symbol of the civilian resistance to Innocent's dictatorship. Distinguished by his his incredible stamina, stubbornness, skill with walker machines (WM), and hatred of being patronized, Jiron will take no guff from Timp or companions Lagu and Eruchi.

Eruchi Cargo

A spoiled 16-year-old, Eruchi's sharp-tongued, temperamental personality combines dangerously with her skill with knives. Bored with the mundane lifestyle of a transport merchant, she helps Jiron and the Sandrats hijack her father's WM Xabungle as part of her plan to run away from home and bring art and civilization to a barbaric world. After her father's death, she is torn between the home she has found aboard the *Iron Gear* and the allure of Innocent's "culture."

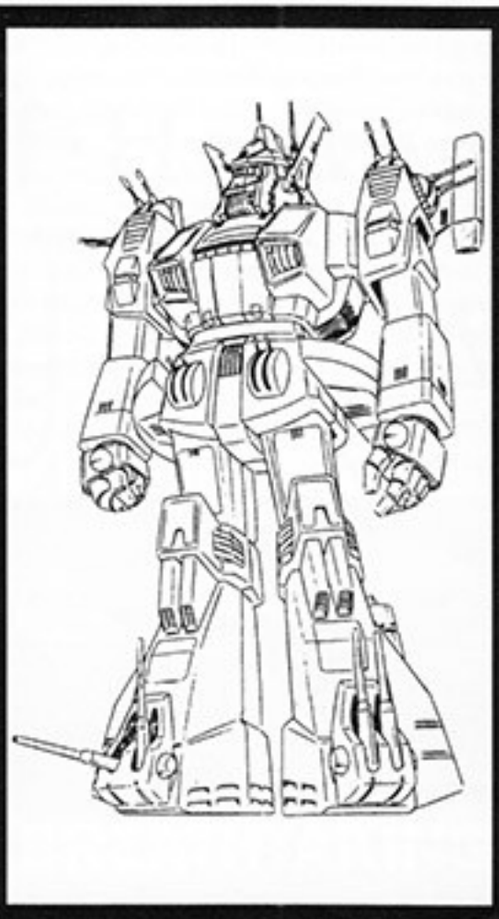
CHARACTERS

Lagu Uralo

Lagu, the tough, strong-willed leader of the Sandrats, initially joins the crew of the *Iron Gear* with the secret intention of hijacking and commanding it. Antisocial and abrasive, it takes some time before she can adjust to being a part of a community instead of a leader. In time, she comes to regard the ship as her home and its crew as her family.

The Sandrats

A gang of young bandits led by Lagu, the Sandrats consist of **Burume**, **Daiku** and eight-year-old **Chiru**, their mascot. Adept at bringing down WM with anti-tank weapons, they prefer to travel on light flying craft called ho'buggies but eventually join the crew of the *Iron Gear*.



The Iron Gear and crew

The *Iron Gear* is a transforming land ship that initially belonged to a transport merchant named **Carrying Cargo**. The ship is manned by a motley crew that includes Eruchi's bodyguard **Fattman Big**, ship's pilot **Kotsett Memuma** and a full complement of dancing girls, including one female impersonator. Also on board is Kid Horra's second-in-command, **Gerava Gerava.**

Timp Sharone

The enigmatic, happy-go-lucky Timp seems to be a lone "breaker" (i.e., hired mercenary), but is actually an agent provocateur for Innocent, roaming the planet Zora to incite trouble and conflict to further Innocent's mysterious purposes. Timp is completely uninterested in his patron's goals or motives; he is in it for the money. His initial assignment, to bring down the Cargo family of transport merchants, is complicated by Jiron's relentless pursuit—in fact, he soon finds the youth's monomaniacal hounding so tiresome that he fakes his own death to get some peace and quiet.

Kid Horra

The treacherous and cunning Horra is Jiron's opposite in both temperament and technique. He realizes early on that he can't hold his own against Jiron in combat, so he manipulates others into doing his fighting for him. An elegant, sophisticated breaker, Horra originally worked for Carrying Cargo, but was then hired by Innocent. Whoever his patron, Horra has two overriding goals: to marry Eruchi and to get the *Iron Gear* for himself.

After the battle is over, Jiron comes across the dying Bickman lying abandoned in the ruins of his ship's bridge. Bickman, who had only been pursuing the lawbreakers at Timp's urging, now realizes that they have all been manipulated. Timp's true master is Innocent, and Innocent, it seems, is loyal to no one.

Eruchi still refuses to accept that Innocent—and Bieru—are untrustworthy. As Jiron drags her back from P-Point's lethally-defended doorstep, a flare of light—the legendary "ascension of light"—shoots up into the heavens. Taking this as a sign from Bieru, Eruchi declares that they will stay there one last night to reflect on the glories of Innocent.

Jiron realizes that this is his last chance to carry out his now month-old quest for revenge. Arming himself and the Xabungle to the teeth, he marches out into the woods surrounding the sanctuary for a final showdown with Timp.

The battle soon moves into the subterranean city's innards, Jiron's incredibly destructive missile barrages causing untold amounts of damage. Every android guard in the city is dispatched to the battle as Jiron destroys Timp's WM and then pursues him on foot into Innocent's vehicle museum. Finally, amidst mass carnage, Jiron captures an Innocent police helicopter and sprays his nemesis with gunfire. Crying to his parents that he has at last avenged them, and blasting the innards of P-Point to smithereens in defiance, he makes his escape.

Timp, merely faking death to elude his tireless, tiresome pursuer, is not allowed to gloat long as the entire dome begins to explode.

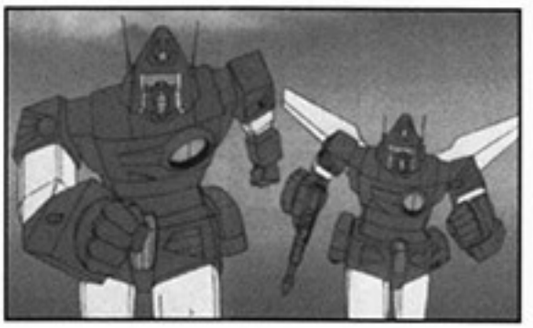
As he evacuates P-Point, Bieru realizes that the civilians are entering a new era. Never before has he seen Jiron's degree of determination, independence and utter lack of respect for the law, and he resolves to put this youth to the test.

Back on the *Iron Gear*, Eruchi wails that the cultured Bieru will now hate her. "He'll forget about it in three days," Jiron mutters before collapsing.

"The Story of Feminine Power" Episodes 15-23

Thanks to Jiron, the *Iron Gear*'s crew are now fugitives. Kid Horra, now on Innocent's payroll and outfitted with the Landship *Double Scale* and the new Galabagos-type WM, attacks the Landship and drives it into the mud sea. Previously, Horra contacted the Hanawan tribe, a subterranean race that lives in caverns beneath the mud sea. The Hanawan have lived underground so long that they can no longer bear direct sunlight and wear bizarre monster-like wetsuits to protect them whenever they go up into the light. Despite their fear of the sun, the Hanawan dream of returning to the surface world and, when Horra tells them that the *Iron Gear* has a map that can guide them to the Hanawan holy land where they may once again live in the sun, they gleefully attack.

Jiron resolves to turn himself in and spare his comrades further harassment but ends up being captured by the Hanawan. He is taken to Munna, lover of the Hanawan leader Genna, and convinces her that Horra has deceived them. When Genna refuses to believe him and challenges Jiron to a knife duel, Jiron makes good his escape.



Horra and Genna gather their forces for an all-out assault, but Munna conspires with the *Iron Gear* crew to lure her lover aboard and reason with him alone. But words fail to persuade the stubborn Genna, and only when Jiron, crying with frustration, begins to beat the Hanawan leader is Genna convinced to help the *Iron Gear* repulse Horra and return to dry land.

After the battle, the *Iron Gear* begins running low on fuel. But when the Landship arrives at a forest village with an oil refinery the locals refuse to sell them any fuel. While Jiron and ship's pilot Kottsett debate whether this is Horra's influence at work again, a neglected Eruchi leaves the ship.

While she only meant to leave for a night, Eruchi soon runs into trouble and is rescued by the charismatic El Condor. El, the son of the village's feudal lord, is *extremely* cultured. But when Eruchi professes her intense admiration for Innocent, he shows her the ruins of the Condor family's defensive fortifications and the wrecked sanctuary dome where his father, who challenged Innocent, fought his last battle. Eruchi, content at last, decides to leave the ship and stay with El.

After El helps to save the *Iron Gear* from Horra's ambush at the oil refinery, Horra begins threatening the village to influence them to take his side in the dispute. El, in charge of protecting the village, goes into the hills after Horra as the breaker begins setting the forest ablaze. After saving Jiron from deadly quicksand, El confronts Horra at the site of his ancient family's crumbled fortifications. But El's antique Ottrich-type WM proves no match for Horra's Galabagos and the young landowner is killed.

Later, while Jiron comforts the grieving Eruchi, Lagu watches and fumes with jealousy.

Soon after, Lagu crashes her ho'buggy in a swamp in a furious attempt to escape Horra's underling, Acon Acag. Awakening in Acon's Landship, the *Buffalo*, she takes an instant liking to the stocky, good-natured Acon and becomes part of his crew. But she has another motive: in this position, she can keep an eye on Acag and his breakers.

Acon soon receives special instructions from Horra. Since Horra was unable to persuade transport merchant Karas Karas to join with him, Acon is to steal a Xabungle and attack Karas' bazaar to make the merchant think that Eruchi is trying to drive him out of business. When Acon carries out his instructions, he discovers that Horra has played him for a fool: the *Double Scale* arrives to "save" Karas from Acon in his stolen Xabungle, and Horra's WM troops overpower and kill the hapless breaker.

Heartbroken by Acon's death, Lagu feels she cannot return to the Sandrats. Purchasing a small WM, she approaches Horra and offers to help him bring down Eruchi and the *Iron Gear*. Despite his aide Gerava's misgivings, Horra places her in charge of a WM group that manages to corner the Landship in a narrow canyon.

While Jiron battles Horra, Lagu leaps up to the *Iron Gear's* bridge in her WM and takes aim at Eruchi. But Eruchi throws her off balance with a well-timed knife throw, tossing her over the side of the ship and into Jiron's Xabungle. Jiron proceeds to beat her soundly, but Lagu is moved by his tears of sorrow and frustration.

While Lagu sulks in a makeshift cell aboard the ship, Horra plots to bring Karas' son Garri and his convoy of ships into the fray. When he begins bombarding both Karas' ship and the *Iron Gear*, Lagu breaks out of her cell and steals a Xabungle to investigate. Jiron follows and the heavily damaged enemy Landships soon retreat. As the mortally wounded Garri dies in his father's arms, Karas Karas swears revenge on Eruchi and the *Iron Gear*.

Karas attacks the *Iron Gear* while Jiron follows the retreating ships back to Karas' campsite and discovers Garri's grave. Lagu, once again in the brig, grudgingly comes to the rescue and drives off Karas' Landship singlehandedly. Now it is Eruchi's turn to be jealous, as her rival is given a hero's welcome. In the face of adversity, the crew of the *Iron Gear* has again become a community. At least, for now...■

Legend Of Heavenly Sphere
SHURATO

BY JAMES TEAL AND TAKAYUKI KARAHASHI

NONSTOP BREATHTAKING COMBAT AND ORIENTAL MYTHOLOGY

If thundering battles, massive carnage, and tear-jerking death scenes are why you watch Japanese animation, then *Legend of Heavenly Sphere Shurato* is not to be missed. In the tradition of such "exotic armor" series as *Saint Seiya* and *Samurai Trooper*, *Shurato* features handsome young men clad in mystic armor who are capable of earth-shattering destruction.

However, *Shurato* offers action with a twist: the show's characters are taken from Buddhist-flavored Hindu mythology, calling ancient gods into play in the clash between good and evil. While many of the names and religious roles of the original gods have been altered to make the show more accessible to Westernized audiences, the show still retains the distinctly romantic and exotic flavor of the Indies.

This distinctive plot hook allows for extensive battle scenes, perhaps *Shurato*'s greatest claim to anime fame. Released on April 6, 1989, *Shurato* fell into an animation schedule that lacked a "serious" action show. Anime viewers, craving a new dynamic martial arts series, eagerly watched *Shurato*'s extensive melee combat, wide-scale property destruction, and high drama.

The series, 38 episodes long, was so popular that after the twenty-fifth episode *Shurato*'s animation studios began working on original animation videos (OAVs). This rush to produce more footage may be the reason that later episodes of *Shurato* suffer in comparison to earlier episodes—the companies that made the beautifully animated first part of the series were working on the OAVs! These high-quality early episodes were in such demand that they were released on videotape before the series had even ended.

Produced by Tatsunoko Pro (*Macross, Zillion*), *Shurato*'s original concept was created by Goh Mihara, with original character designs by Matsuri Okuda (*Legend of the Galactic Heroes*). The all-important armor was designed by Anmonite (armor designers for *Southern Cross*). The series, directed by Takao Koyama (*Dr. Slump, Dragonball*), was supervised by Ippei Kuri (*Gatchaman*).

Shurato is an excellent example of a high-action, combat-packed adventure series. It's primary recurring theme, that love and friendship can conquer evil, is simply an added benefit. Anime viewers looking for a dynamic, fight-an-episode series should look no further than *Shurato*.

EPISODES 1—13

At a martial arts competition at Budokan in Tokyo, two best friends, Shurato Hidaka and Gai Kuroki, spar violently in the ring. Suddenly, before the winner can be determined, a blazing sphere of light swallows the combatants whole. As the pair is transincarnated through time and space, Shurato hears a woman's voice repeating a strange incantation in an unknown language before he passes out.

A startled Shurato, awakened with a kiss in the middle of a broad field, opens his eyes to see the friendly face of a pretty girl, Lakshu. Disoriented and confused, he tries to adjust to the fact that he seems to be in another world called Tenkûkai. The girl's pet dragon, Mi, notices the *veda* in Shurato's belt sash. This marks him as one of the *Hachibushû*.

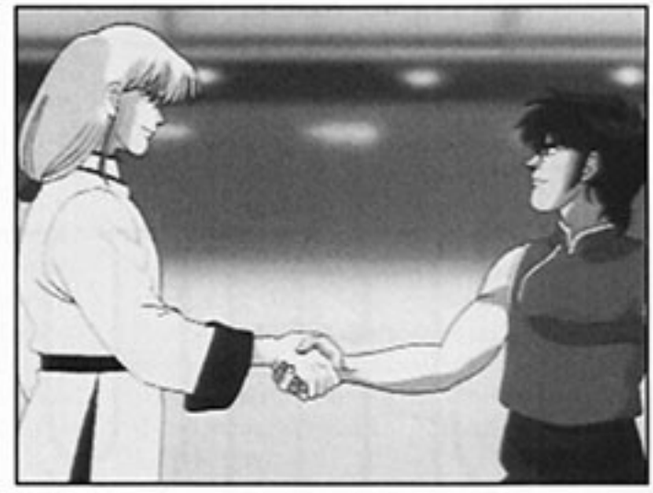
Before Shurato can learn what this means, Lakshu shrieks. Shurato turns to see his friend Gai, clad in strange armor. Relieved to see that he is not alone in this unfamiliar place, Shurato rushes to greet his friend--and is met with Gai's sword. Confused by this vicious attack, Shurato asks Gai to explain his actions.

"Shurato—die!" is Gai's only response.

As he attempts to defend himself, Shurato blocks Gai's sword with the *veda*. With a flash of light, the veda transforms into a *baluda* --a flight platform--and knocks Gai's sword from his grasp. Suddenly, Shurato hears the woman's chanting voice again. When he joins the chant, "Om Shura Svaha," his *baluda* transforms into a *shakti* suit of armor similar to Gai's.

More evenly matched, the two resume their battle. Shurato manages to gain the upper hand and knocks Gai over a nearby cliff. Gai feigns injury, and when Shurato rushes to tend to his fallen friend, Gai hits him with a sucker punch and follows up with a chant that conjures *Shippu Marouken*, a devastating gust of wind.

Pinned under trees, rocks and other debris strewn about by this assault, Shurato is helpless as Gai closes in for the kill. But as Gai prepares to finish off his one-time friend, a figure on a *baluda* interferes. Reiga, another member of the *Hachibushû*, distracts Gai and rescues Shurato.



Reiga takes Shurato and Lakshu to Tenkûden, the palace of the goddess Vishnu on the top of Tenkûju, a giant seven-tiered tree at the center of Tenkûkai. Vishnu, the patron goddess of Tenkûkai, and her aideIndrahh welcome Shurato to the *Deva* army and introduce him to the *Hachibushû*, the eight best soldiers in the ranks: Reiga the Phoenix, Hyûga the Tiger, Ryôma the Dragon King, Renghe the Unicorn, Kuuyah the Water Buffalo, and Dan the Rhino. Shurato's totem is now the Lion, and he learns that Gai is the Wolf.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The Asura

The evil gods of Tenkûkai, the Asura intend to wrest control from the good *Deva* gods. Their leader, the bloodthirsty god Shiva the Destroyer, is determined to undermine the peace in Tenkûkai through outright warfare. This is just as dangerous for Earth as it is for Tenkûkai, since any trauma in Tenkûkai has a corresponding catastrophe on Earth.

baluda (see also *shakti* and *veda*, below)

Soma-powered flight units used by both *Deva* and *Asura* warriors, baludas are usually carried in a small, compact, golden form called a *veda*. The user's *soma* transforms the *veda* into a baluda, which can be transformed into *shakti* armor with the recital of the user's *tantora*. Baludas average 8 to 12 feet in length, are the colors of the warrior's shakti, and can carry extra passengers. Since baludas are powered by *soma*, a very sick warrior may not be able to summon his flight unit.

The Deva

The good gods of Tenkûkai, the Deva are diametrically opposed to the evil *Asura* gods.

Deva Army

Since Tenkûkai is roughly analogous to heaven, all residents of Tenkûkai could be called gods. But members of the Deva army, especially the *Hachibushû*, seem to possess a great quantity of and control over their *soma*. Members in the Deva army must train themselves vigorously in the ways of combat to be selected as a warrior.

Hachibushû

According to Hindu doctrine, the *Hachibushû* were demons of Hinduism that Buddha converted into his sentinels. However, in ***Shurato***, the *Hachibushû* are the eight most skilled warriors of the *Deva* army and Vishnu's most trusted guards since he beginning of time. The *Hachibushû*'s function is to carry out the word of Vishnu, fight against the *Asura*, and lead the *Deva* army. Selected through a rigorous series of training and tests, the *Hachibushû* train from a very early age in hopes of joining the *Deva* army and are marked by superior fighting skills, ability in controlling and directing their *soma*, and a drive to succeed and excel.

Hissatsu Waza

A Hissatsu Waza ("final attack"), is a personalized, decisive killing technique. Invoked by a specific *tantora* or mantra, a Waza manifests either as a concentrated blast of *soma* or as a mystical summoning of wind, water, fire, crystal, feathers, illusions, etc. Each warrior has their own unique Hissatsu Waza, which is related to the nature of their godhood and individual *shakti*. While there is no limit to the number of Hissatsu Wazas one can learn, mastery of even one Waza calls for an inordinate amount of training. The possession of multiple final attacks is a sure sign of great discipline.

Sekishuhan

Symbol of the decay overtaking the land when Vishnu is entombed, Sekishuhan causes a severe fever. Symptoms include large red spots. Those taken ill usually die from this terrible disease.

shakti
The armor of the warrior-gods, a shakti not only serves as protective gear but enhances the wearer's *soma* power as well. Each warrior has a unique shakti that reflects their totem animal; when not in use, a shakti can be transformed back into the small, conveniently-sized *veda*.

soma
Soma is the energy that moves everything in Tenkûkai. It serves as a lifeforce and can be channeled or projected into action, such as combat. Usually, the more extensive one's training, the more soma power one has (for example, Vishnu has kept her shape and form for over 10,000 years because of her strong soma power). When a person in Tenkûkai dies, their body discorporates and their soma flows upward into the sky. While running out of soma means death, Vishnu can draw upon ambient soma and reincarnate or resurrect the dead.

tantora
A tantora (also called a *mantra*) is a warrior's incantation to focus and increase their *soma* and to convert *soma* energy to physical strength. It takes a massive amount of training to master *soma* usage through chants. Every warrior has a different tantora, and different actions require different chants—that is, the tantora is different for various attacks and to don *shakti* armor.

veda
About 6 to 8 inches long and apparently made of solid gold, a veda is the portable form of both a warrior's *baluda* and *shakti*. When the owner wills it, the veda transforms into either a flying platform (*baluda*) or the warrior's personalized armor (*shakti*). The veda can also be enlarged with *soma* until it takes on the size and shape of the warrior's namesake beast.

PLACES AND OBJECTS

Gekkôkutsu
A magical fortress of the Deva army, Gekkôkutsu's entrance appears to be a giant reclining statue. However, it is extensively booby trapped with snares that are activated by expenditures of *soma*—here, not even *Deva* warriors can wear their *shaktis* or use their *wazas*.

Idôkyû
Nearly all of the 500,000 *Asura* gods were banished to Idôkyû, a giant netherworld structure, when the *Deva* gods triumphed 10,000 years ago. While Vishnu banished Idôkyû itself from Tenkûkai, it was merely put in an eccentric 10,000-year orbit and is fast reapproaching Tenkûkai.

Kyodaishinzo
This giant figure, which appears to be a huge statue of a meditating six-armed figure, is the greatest trap in the *Gekkôkutsu*. Once activated, the figure's crossed legs become eight thrashing tentacles; a mouth on its chest spews fire.

The Mahava
An enormous floating fortress in the form of a giant turtle, the Mahava is an airborne battleship for the Deva army. Like all other mechanical objects in Tenkûkai, it is powered by *soma*.

Shutentou
The island of Shutentou holds the four temples, collectively called the *Yonshijinden*, that are key to opening the mystical gate to Tenkûju.

Tenkûden
A palace standing on the very topmost tier of the Tenkûju, the majestic Tenkûden is the home and headquarters for the Deva gods. Tenkûden is the center of the center of the world; Vishnu lives here and radiates her *soma* all across Tenkûkai.

Tenkûju
A giant, seven-tiered tree at the center of Tenkûkai, each of Tenkûju's tiers is the home of hundreds of thousands of Deva gods.

Tenkûkai
Tenkûkai and Earth are interconnected, like the front and back of a single object. An event on one world has a counterpart in the other. However, since Tenkûkai is a higher plane of existence, events in Tenkûkai immediately affect the residents of Earth.

Yoshinden
Also called Shijinden, these four temples are placed at the four corners of the island of Shutentou. Each temple holds a magical crystal orb that must be charged with *soma* before the mystical gate to Tenkûju will open. The *Suzakaden* (temple of the Red Sparrow) is to the south, the *Genbuden* (temple of the Black Turtle) is to the north, the *Byakkoden* (temple of the White Tiger) is to the west, and the *Seiryuden* (temple of the Blue Dragon) is to the east.

Vishnu tells Shurato that he and Gai are actually *Deva* gods, sent to Earth for a special mission. The *Deva*, the force that maintains the harmony of Tenkûkai, fought the *Asura* gods for the right to rule 10,000 years ago. The triumphant *Deva* gods then banished the *Asura* to *Idôkyû*, which passes near Tenkûkai once every 10,000 years. The return of *Idôkyû* is near, and so Vishnu has returned Shurato and Gai to Tenkutai to take their place among the *Hachibushû*.

When Indrahh asks after the absent Gai, Lakshu tells him that he went mad and tried to kill Shurato. Vishnu appoints Indrahh to look into the matter. But when Indrahh speaks with Gai, he instructs him to kill Shurato later that evening.

Even in Tenkûden Shurato still is not safe from Gai, who ambushes him in his room. While Shurato is distracted the traitorous Indrahh casts a spell that turns Vishnu into stone, "freezing" her into statue-like immobility. She summons Hyûga to her chambers but he arrives too late. "You shouldn't have seen this, Hyûga," Indrahh shouts as he attacks. "Now that Vishnu is stone she can no longer reincarnate you if you die!"

Gai's relentless assault drives Shurato into Vishnu's chamber, where Shurato and Hyûga are quickly overpowered by Gai and Indrahh. Lakshu, who has attached herself to Shurato's side, tries to protect the two of them but to no avail. Just as the three are about to be slain, a wall of force protects them and teleports them away. Indrahh suspects Vishnu has somehow evaded his spell and intervened, so he curses her again.

Indrahh calls a meeting in Vishnu's chamber and tells the remaining *Hachibushû* and the *Deva* army that Shurato and Hyûga, traitors working for the *Asura* army, attacked Vishnu and turned her to stone. Reiga is skeptical, but with Gai in command the *Hachibushû* are sent forth to hunt the trio down. Only the death of Shurato can restore Vishnu, Indrahh tells them.

Disoriented and confused, Shurato, Hyûga and Lakshu try to figure out where they are and discuss the situation, but Shurato is disgusted with the entire mess and storms off. While Lakshu devotedly follows Shurato, Hyûga plans to go back to Tenkûden and explain Indrahh's treachery. Unknown to all three, two mysterious figures—Sallas and Mahyuri—are watching them.

Before long Ryôma the Dragon King finds and ambushes Shurato. Despite their compatible weapons and armor, Shurato's inexperience gives Ryôma the edge and Lakshu runs off in search of Hyûga and help. But Shurato has learned from Gai's earlier attacks—when Ryôma invokes his flaming killing strike, *Ryuou Kaengeki*, Shurato wisely jumps out of the target area. Just as Shurato tires, Hyûga arrives. Finally the two manage to convince Ryôma of their innocence and he joins them in their quest to prove their innocence and reveal Indrahh's treachery.

As the foursome travel through the forests of Tenkûkai, they meet and conflict with Renghe the Unicorn and *Deva* knights Takshaka and Ranbahn. During this scuffle Shurato is unknowingly rescued from death from the mysterious Sallas and Mahyuri. Finally he discovers the incantation necessary for his *Hissatsu Waza*; the *Shura Mahhaken*. The devastating blast ends the battle. Takshaka, Ranbahn and a great deal of the woods surrounding the battle are completely demolished, but the injured Renghe is able to escape.

While using some of his own special techniques, Reiga discovers that Indrahh and Gai are involved with some very suspicious characters. Hidden, Reiga listens to Indrahh and Gai instruct the murderous Kali to slay Shurato and overhears incriminating evidence that Indrahh, not Shurato and Hyûga, are the traitors to Vishnu. He decides to help the rebel *Hachibushû* clear their names and follows Kali to Shurato. After the venomous beast has been slain, Reiga explains to Shurato and the others what he has learned.

As their journey to Tenkûden continues, the group notices that the plant life in Tenkûkai is starting to wither. When they give a drink to a man begging at the edge of the forest, they note strange red splotches on his body, symptoms of a fever called *Sekishuhan*. After the man thanks them for the drink, he dies, dissolving into a mass of glowing life force that quickly evaporates into the air. Such blight and disease were never present during all of Vishnu's previous reign.

A sudden ambush by Renghe and fellow *Deva* warriors Dahra and Muhra is interrupted by the arrival of yet another *Deva* knight, Mariichi. He and Renghe are initially shocked to see each other, but Mariichi recovers quickly and uses his powers of illusion to allow the party to escape. Renghe fumes as she recalls a time when she and Mariichi were better friends.

When Hyûga notices that Mariichi has also contracted *Sekishuhan*, Mariichi casually says that he is resigned to his fate. Shurato refuses to accept Mariichi's death so calmly and rushes off to find Renghe and inform her of Mariichi's illness. He does not want the two former friends to be enemies during Mariichi's final days.

Once again ambushed by Renghe's party, Shurato tries to plead his case but Renghe refuses to believe him. Mariichi and the others arrive to aid Shurato when the battle begins again. As Shurato and his group square off against Dahra and Muhra, Renghe and Mariichi single each other out.

"I wage my life on this battle!" Mariichi swears, and Renghe, unaware of his disease, prepares for battle.

Dahra and Muhra are pulverized by Shurato and Hyûga's combined *soma*. The group rushes to aid Mariichi, but he demands that they stay out of this duel. With death so close, he would prefer to face it fighting. Lakshu notices the physical beauty of the conflict: both Mariichi and Renghe are perfectly focused physically, mentally and emotionally on this duel. All their emotions for each other are shown in this final battle—emotions that, sadly, they never knew how to show any other way.

As Renghe prepares to deal her death blow, she sees Mariichi falter, coughing blood. She hesitates, knowing that she hasn't hit him hard enough to cause an internal injury, but he repeats his vow of death before surrender as he charges her. She pauses momentarily as a flood of memories wash over her—and then deals her fatal attack, *Narah Musouka*. With his final steps, Mariichi staggers forward, embraces her as he had wanted to do for so long, and dies in her arms. A tearful Renghe escapes before anyone else can approach.

Realizing how far they are from Tenkûden, the group discusses a series of possible magical shortcuts, the first being through a nearby cave. When Shurato wonders why they have not attempted to use this way sooner, they tell him that the cave, called *Gekkôkutsu*, is riddled with traps that respond to the *soma* given off by the *shakti*. Shurato thinks that this might be an advantage, since it means that any enemy *Hachibushû* will be equally unable to use their *soma*, but the others inform him that Kuuyah the Water Buffalo can disguise his *soma* and will be safe.

The group decides to take their chances anyway and enter the cave. Correctly assuming that the renegade *Hachibushû* would brave the cave regardless of the danger, Kuuyah and Dan ready themselves for the upcoming battle. Kuuyah uses his unique ability to mask his *soma* emissions to shield Dan's armor so he too will be invisible to the traps.

SHURATO: HINDUISM OR BUDDHISM?

Just from the names in ***Shurato***—Indrahh, Vishnu, Shiva—viewers might assume that the show is based on Hindu mythology. But matters are a little more complicated than that: Hindu mythology is also part of Mahayana Buddhism, which made Hindu converts by incorporating Hindu ideals into Buddhist doctrine.

So is ***Shurato*** Hindu or Buddhist? The answer is really *neither*, since ***Shurato***'s creators seem to have highlighted their favorite mythological elements and ignored or changed others. However, their original source material was probably Mahayana Buddhism instead of pure Hindu mythology.

For example, Mahayana Buddhism preaches that Buddha, after converting eight evil Hindu demons to good, recruited them as his sentinels. Can it be coincidence that ***Shurato*** features eight *Hachibushû*, who are called the "eight sentinels of Vishnu"? *(See character descriptions for more information on the mythological derivations of the characters' names.).*

Mahayana Buddhism also allowed Hindu gods into Buddhist heaven, albeit only into the lowest levels. Of Buddhism's 27 hierarchical heavens, the Hindu gods were confined to the lowest six and therefore still had human vices such as greed, lust, war, and love. ***Shurato*** takes place in Tenkûkai, the so-called Heavenly Sphere, which ironically is the *lowest* of the six heavens that Hindu gods occupy in Buddhist mythology.

Buddhism also holds that Indrahh, ruler of both the first and second lowest heavens, resides in the majestic mountain Shumisen at the center of the world. Indrahh is perpetually at war with the *Shura* demons and their leader, Asura. This has been altered in ***Shurato*** to allow Vishnu (who in Buddhism is a god, *not* a goddess, of much higher prestige than Indrahh) to rule Tenkûkai with Indrahh as her military leader. In addition, Shurato (from the word *Shura*) has been changed from a demon fighting the gods to a warrior on the side of good.

There are other, more numerous changes to mention. Perhaps the most amusing is the splitting of Lakshmi, the goddess of love and beauty and Vishnu's consort, into two characters: Lakshu and her pet dragon, Mi. (Interestingly enough, Mi is a *winged* dragon in ***Shurato***—something usually depicted only in China, not India.) But the most obvious change in ***Shurato*** is the use of the word *soma* to indicate a sort of spiritual aura power. Soma, instead of a spiritual term, is actually an opium-based drink that is still imbibed in India today. While drinking soma may make one feel that one has mystical powers, in ***Shurato*** *soma* has a more immediate impact—if you run out of it, you die. ■

Shurato's party is quickly met by Dan's fierce assaults. Unable to use their *shakti* without setting off traps, the group is forced to flee. Deciding that they will need to use their *baludas* just to keep ahead of Kuuyah and Dan, the group branches off in three different directions to make the chase more difficult.

After avoiding several traps, Shurato faces Kuuyah alone. Knowing he has no chance against him unarmored, Shurato transforms his *baluda* into his *shakti* and triggers the cave's deadliest trap: the gigantic, fire-spewing monster *Kyodaishinzo*. Shurato realizes he is totally overpowered when he tries his *Mahhaken* attack to no effect. Fighting a running battle along the cave's corridors, he eventually finds his allies—who are as ineffective against *Kyodaishinzo* as he was. Realizing they must combine their efforts to defeat the beast, Shurato prepares his *Mahhaken* a second time while Hyûga, Ryôma and Reiga channel their *soma* into him. With so much power, the resulting explosion not only kills Kyodaishinzo but stuns Kuuyah and Dan and opens the gateway to the shortcut.

Relieved at their escape and heartened at their shortened journey, the group is sobered by the spreading death and decay in Tenkûkai's landscape. The site of the next magical shortcut, a lake called *Shutentou*, is covered with fish floating dead in the water. Hyûga, realizing that all of Tenkûkai is dying, explains to Shurato that Tenkûkai, the world of the gods, and Earth are linked. If one dies the other will surely perish as well.

The gravity of the situation firming their resolve to punish Indrahh's treachery, the party decides that they will travel to *Yonshinden*, site of the *Byakkoden*, *Genbuden*, *Seiryuden*, and *Suzakuden* temples. There they can each use their *soma* to charge the four temple jewels and open

Heiseimon, the great doorway to Tenkûden. This shortcut will take months off their travel time and at the rate things are decaying, they need to free Vishnu as soon as possible.

Unaware that they are being watched, the group makes their way across the lake to *Shutentou*. Spying on them from atop an island peak, Indrahh's ally Nirihari summons lightning bolts and causes enormous waves that sweep Ryôma and Hyûga away from the main group.

Once on the island, Shurato, Lakshu and Reiga are promptly ambushed by stone creatures who rip themselves from the ground. Lakshu is captured by Nirihari as Shurato and Reiga deal with the rocky automatons and they are forced to rescue her. Once they discover their adversary, they try to reason with Nirihari and explain Indrahh's duplicity.

Much to their surprise, they learn that, unlike Renghe, Dan and Kuuyah, Nirihari knows of Indrahh's true allegiance and follows him anyway. Taking advantage of their surprise, Nirihari traps each of them in an illusory world. Shurato, believing he has woken from a bad dream back on Earth, is overjoyed to find that his childhood friend Gai is no longer trying to kill him. However, Reiga, faced with the image of Vishnu thanking him for all he has done to help restore Tenkûkai, is aware of Nirihari's powers and knows all is an illusion.

As Reiga prepares to lash out at the false Vishnu, Gai draws his sword in Shurato's dream. Too late, Reiga realizes that he is striking at Shurato, not Vishnu. Although Shurato is not seriously hurt, Reiga is infuriated by Nirihari's ruse and squares

THE *HACHIBUSHU*

SHURATO HIDAKA (*SHURA-O SHURATO*)
***ASURA*, THE FIGHTING LION**

Brave, loyal and determined, Shurato was transincarnated from Earth to Tenkûkai to become the heir to Brahma the creator. Shurato dons the *shakti* of the Lion, but as of yet he has had little instruction on how to focus his soma. Since he never has the time or opportunity to learn anything more subtle, his *Hissatsu Waza* is brutally straightforward. *In religious mythology, Shura (Asura) was a fiend of war who dared, despite hopeless odds, to defy an army of gods lead by Indrahh.*

REIGA (*KARURA-O REIGA*)
***GARUDA*, THE PHOENIX**

The relaxed, flippant Reiga counts sarcasm among his many extremely powerful and versatile attacks. A master tactician, Reiga has command over more *Hissatsu Wazas* than any of the other *Hachibushû*. Since his *shakti* is the phoenix, it is the only suit capable of flight. *In religious mythology, Karura (Garuda) was a bird who defied the gods to gain immortality and fight the dragons that held his mother captive; later, the errant bird swore his loyalty to Vishnu.*

RYOMA (*RYU-O RYOMA*)
THE DRAGON

Fearless, generous and self sacrificing, Ryôma of the dragon *shakti* is Hyûga's best friend and the strongest of the Hachibushû. The first to find fugitives Shurato and Hyûga, he is finally convinced to join their quest by the pain in Hyûga eyes.

GAI KUROKI (*YASHA-O GAI*)
***YAKSHA*, THE DEMON WOLF**

Once gentle and caring but now harsh and remorseless, Gai, like Shurato, was sent to the human world to become the heir to Brahma. Shiva's manipulations awaken Gai's dark *soma* and he turns against his former friend. Gai's *shakti* is the wolf, which epitomizes his newly dark, savage nature. Gai's once sweet, caring personality is known only in Shurato's memories. *In religious mythology, Yasha (Yaksha) was a wood sprite with two faces: one a fierce demon, and the other a beneficent provider who would aid passers-by.*

KUYA (*DAPPA-O KUYA*)
***GANDHARVA*, THE WATER BUFFALO**

Kûya is the only member of the *Hachibushû* who has attained the state of nothingness and can therefore conceal his *soma*. Serious, thoughtful, and disciplined, Kûya's skill comes from intense training. His *shakti* is the water buffalo. *In religious mythology, Dappa (Gandharva) was a musician who played for Indrahh in heaven.*

HYUGA (*TEN-O HYUGA*)
***DEVA*, THE SKY TIGER**

With the *shakti* of the tiger, the powerful Hyûga is initially Vishnu's aide and leader of the *Hachibushû*. When he witnesses Indrahh's betrayal of the lovely Vishnu, he becomes Shurato's fellow fugitive. *was a heavenly musician with the head of a horse and the body of a man, who paired with Dappa (Kûya) to serve Indrahh in heaven.*

DAN (*HIRA-O DAN*)
***HIRA*, THE RHINO**

The headstrong, chivalrous, competitive Dan fiercely loves Vishnu and has dedicated his life to serving her. He trained since the age of eight to become a member of the *Deva* army. Like his *shakti*, the rhinoceros, Dan is single-minded and aggressive.

RENGHE (*NARA-O RENGE*)
***KIMNARA*, THE UNICORN**

The only female member of the *Hachibushû*, Renghe acts as though she has something to prove. She secretly harbors an intense love for the evil Indrahh and refuses to forsake him even when she learns that he has betrayed Vishnu. Her *shakti* is of the unicorn. *In religious mythology, Nara (Kimnara) was a heavenly musician with the head of a horse and the body of a man who paired with Dappa (Kûya) to serve Indrahh in heaven.*

ALLIES OF THE *ASURA*

INDRAHH (RAI-TEI INDRA)
THE THUNDER GOD
A secret ally of the evil *Asura*, Indrahh has been undercover as Vishnu's right hand for 10,000 years. He prepares the way for the *Asura*'s return by cursing Vishnu into stone and blaming Shurato for this terrible act of treason. The *Hachibushû*, divided by this betrayal in their midst, must fight not only the *Asura* but each other. But Indrahh is secretly torn: his last act is to curse his fate and wish for reincarnation as a true *Deva* god.

NIRIHARI (MUGENSHI NIRIHARI)
THE ILLUSIONIST
Indrahh's ally, Nirihari believes Indrahh's side will be the victor in the clash between the *Deva* and *Asura* gods. His *Hissatsu Waza* is similarly devious, since it creates illusions that manipulate his enemies into destroying one another without any physical effort from Nirihari himself.

THE *DEVA* GODS

VISHNU *(CHOWA-SHIN VISHNU)*
GODDESS OF PEACE AND HARMONY: THE PRESERVER
Patron goddess of Tenkûkai for over 10,000 years and leader of all Deva gods, Vishnu is capable of calling on the released *soma* of the dead to heal the wounded and reincarnate any once-living thing. Since this power means that she can endlessly reincarnate the Deva army, the evil *Asura* gods must eliminate her before they can reconquer Tenkûkai. When Vishnu is finally captured by Indrahh's curse, her loss is reflected in chaos and sickness across Tenkûkai.

SALLAS AND MAHYURI
Mysterious figures who secretly aid Shurato in his quest, these two Deva gods are actually secret agents of Vishnu.

MARICHII (MARISHI-TEN MARICHI)
THE PANTHER
Hyûga's friend and fellow-warrior, Marichii has loved Renghe from afar his entire life but has never admitted to his feelings. *In religious mythology, Mirishiten (Marichi) is known as the god of fierce victory.*

LAKSHU
Cute, energetic Lakshu is devoted to Shurato and uses her *soma* to aid him on many occasions. Lakshu was born near a spring of *soma* near the Hôrai mountain and her *soma* is unusually strong, leading to speculation that she is destined to be Vishnu's heir.

MI
Lakshu's loyal dragon-friend.

off to battle the friendi. But yet another set of eyes are watching the conflict: Sallas and Mahyuri look on from a distance.

But instead of subtly helping as they did in previous battles, the pair directly intervenes: Sallas draws her bow and slices Lakshu's bonds with a well-placed *soma* arrow so she can help the injured Shurato.

When Reiga gets the upper hand in the battle, Nirihari feigns surrender and then catches Reiga off guard. But before Nirihari can do any further harm, a furious Shurato vaporizes Nirihari with a single devastating blast, leaving only a blackened crater as proof that the evil creature ever existed.

But the conflict still is not over. Just as Hyûga and Ryôma finally reunite with the group, the Giant Turtle ship *Mahava* passes overhead. The rebel *Hachibushû* ready for battle, realizing that they must face the remaining *Hachibushû* to enter the four *Yonshinden*.

As Shurato and Lakshu approach the *Genbuden*, temple of the Black Turtle, they see Dan waiting on the stairway. They try to reason with him, but Dan believes that Shurato is responsible for Vishnu's condition and the deterioration of Tenkûkai and will not be placated. Shurato is unprepared for the ferocity of Dan's attack and quickly learns that Dan's loyalty to Vishnu surpasses any logic as Dan's axe blade slices into his midsection. As he thrashes Shurato, Dan's mind drifts back to his first days of training when Vishnu awarded him with a pendant for diligence and commitment to excellence in her name. He cherishes this momento and carries it with him always.

After listening to Dan proudly reminisce, Shurato tries once again to convince Dan that he wants to help Vishnu, but Dan's devotion to his goddess is too great to allow him to consider the word of someone who might have harmed her. Shurato tries the *Mahhaken* , but Dan is ready and counters with his *Hiba Ryuskou*, literally burying Shurato alive.

At the *Seiryuden*, temple of the Blue Dragon, Ryôma approaches Gai diplomatically only to be told to don his *shakti* and prepare to fight. Without hesitation, Ryôma charges, but Gai effortlessly deflects Ryôma's flung trident. Suddenly, Ryôma realizes that Gai's *soma* is dark instead of light. But he isn't sure what this means...

Lakshu desperately claws at the cold stone courtyard, trying in vain to rescue Shurato. But as Dan tries to drag Lakshu back to Indrahh, Shurato erupts from the ground. Aware that he is fighting for both Tenkûkai and Earth, but already taxed to his limits, Shurato attempts to fight only to be soundly beaten. But before Dan can deliver the death blow, Lakshu interposes herself between the two combatants. Since she is an innocent bystander in the conflict, Dan will not hurt her. Her refusal to get out of the way is so intense that the *soma* she projects resonates in Vishnu's pendant. The feeling is so similar to the one Vishnu created that Dan begins to doubt his actions.

While he is distracted, Shurato dazedly rises to fight once more. With Lakshu out of harm's way, Shurato begins his chant for the *Mahhaken* as Dan readies his final attack, *Hiba Gekishinha*. As the *soma* in the two rises, Dan's chain snaps in two, sending the pendant flying. Dan, taken aback by this proof that something is wrong, is distracted long enough to give Shurato an edge.

Their two mighty *Hissatsu Wazas* strike, exploding spectacularly. Dan's battered body falls to the ground. With his dying breath, he drags himself to the pendant and, clutching it to his breast, wonders why Vishnu's will was not with him. As he dies, his body discorporates and his life force dissipates, leaving only his *veda* behind. Shurato, drained from the confrontation, passes out.

Back at *Seiryuden*, Ryôma's continued assault on Gai is completely fruitless. When Gai finally draws his sword and strikes back, drawing blood, Ryôma wonders where Gai's power comes from--he has not been in Tenkûkai long enough to receive proper training. Gai boasts that just being in Tenkûkai increases his power.

Realizing there is only one way to cope with a foe this powerful, Ryôma hopes Shurato will forgive him for killing his best friend as he prepares his *Ryuou Kaengeki* attack. But Gai evades the deadly blow twice, dodging the first strike and snuffing out the second attack with his *Shippu*

Marouken. With Ryôma weakened, Gai hacks at him, demanding to know where Shurato is.

In the *Byakkoden*, temple of the White Tiger, Hyûga tries to reason with Renghe. To prove that he does not wish to fight, he has donned his *shakti*. While Renghe occasionally pauses between attacks to allow him to explain the situation, she remains unconvinced even when Hyûga tells her that Mariichi would not wish for them to fight. Hyûga cannot understand why she follows Indrahh's commands so blindly.

"Indrahh's enemies are my enemies!" she insists, slamming Hyûga into a wall.

As Gai continues to punish Ryôma for his silence, Ryôma desperately decides that he will risk death in a chancy attempt to charge the temple's crystal sphere so that the others can go on to Tenkûden. Hopefully Gai will be killed in the process. The two rush each other, Gai's sword cutting cruelly through Ryôma's torso. With Gai's blade immobilized, Ryôma attacks with the *Ryuou Kaengeki* at point blank range, engulfing both Gai and himself in flames. Gai, taken by surprise, simply brushes himself off, scoffs mockingly and strides away. Ryôma, left for dead, lies slumped in the midst of the debris caused by his last desperate attack.

Having taken enough physical and verbal abuse in his battle with Renghe, Hyûga summons his *shakti* and counters Renghe's final strike, *Narah Musouka*, with his *Tenou Goumakou*, a barrier of crystal. The explosion of their two attacks strikes Renghe unconscious and blasts open a clear pathway to the temple's crystal sphere . But as Hyûga focuses his *soma* into it, Renghe is already recovering and prepared to attack.

Her assault is stopped short when Hyûga's *soma* activates something within the jewel and it projects the image of Indrahh's traitorous assault on the goddess Vishnu. Renghe, completely stunned, simply cannot believe that Indrahh would betray Vishnu and the *Hachibushû*. Deciding that

Hyûga is trying to trick her, she resumes her attack—but as the crystal sphere continues to play the scene and Hyûga resumes his arguments, she finally has to believe that he is telling the truth.

As Renghe breaks down, Hyûga realizes that she has harbored a secret love for Indrahh for years. Mariichi understood this, and secure in the knowledge that she would never accept his love, was content to die at her hands. As much as Indrahh's betrayal pains her, Renghe loves Indrahh and will fight for him no matter what the circumstances or consequences. Hyûga understands and respects her loyalty, but knows the world cannot afford for him to lose.

The two renew their duel, Renghe quickly gaining the upper hand. In an attempt to end the battle quickly, she strikes with her *Musouka*, but Hyûga uses his *Tenou Suishouketsu* to summon a wall of frozen stalagmites to disperse her blast. *Soma* and frozen shards spiral toward Renghe, freezing her solid in a pillar of ice. Her last thoughts are of Indrahh.

"You don't deserve her love!" Hyûga curses Indrahh.

He launches his *soma* into the crystal sphere, sending a column of *soma* arcing skyward. The first crystal sphere is charged. Lakshu is overjoyed when this signal finally rouses Shurato from unconsciousness. But before they can enter the *Genbuden* temple and charge the next crystal sphere, Gai appears and seals the building. The temple cannot be entered until Gai is defeated.

At the *Suzakuden*, the temple of the Red Sparrow, Reiga and Kuuyah are evenly matched as they attempt to persuade the other, by reason and force, to accept their version of events. Finally deciding that combat is senseless, Reiga drops his weapons and, generating a multitude of feathers with his *soma*, sends them aloft in search of Kuuyah's family. Kuuyah is horrified by the images the feathers send back—his young sister Lebi is dying of *Sekishuuhan*—but does not believe that Indrahh is to blame.

To convince him, Reiga redirects a feather to Tenkûden, but Indrahh's mystic wards destroy the feather and cause Reiga intense pain. Linked to Reiga through his *soma*, the feathers are part of him and their individual deaths are severe blows. Determined to show Kuuyah the truth, Reiga sends a barrage of feathers to the palace in the hope that one will get through. As each feather is destroyed, Reiga's injuries increase, but finally a solitary feather penetrates the unseeen barrier and enters Vishnu's chamber. Before Indrahh destroys the feather with a single glance, Reiga and Kuuyah see Indrahh reinforcing the spell that keeps Vishnu prisoner.

Reiga collapses in pain, hoping this image of Indrahh is enough to convince Kuuyah. But although Kuuyah is deeply disturbed, he is not so easily converted to Reiga's cause. Their battle begins again, finally ending when Reiga surprises Kuuyah with his *Karura Yokushiran*.

Kuuyah, sensing that Reiga held back part of his power, asks why. Reiga explains that long ago he promised Lebi that he would not let any harm come to her older brother. Even before Reiga can finish speaking, Kuuyah hears Lebi's voice crying out as her body discorporates and her *soma* floats skyward. Struggling to his feet, Kuuyah cries his sister's name, his *soma* glowing around him. His mental energies taking him to the realm of the dead, he sees his sister one last time before she fades forever.

But as Lebi fades from his view, Vishnu appears. As Kuuyah's distraught psyche returns to the battered temple, she confirms Reiga's story of Indrahh's treachery. Exhausted, Kuuyah uses the last of his *soma* to destroy the barrier to the third crystal sphere. His bodily and spiritual strength sapped, he dies at Reiga's side, their friendship intact. Kuuyah's *veda* in hand, Reiga channels his power through the crystal sphere, sending a second pillar of *soma* into the sky.

Shurato and Gai, squaring off to do battle, see the *soma* launching skyward. But before Gai can take advantage of Shurato's distraction and attack, a third beam lances upward from the temple where he left Ryôma for dead. Gai, shocked, watches as Ryôma, then Reiga and Hyûga, arrive to do battle.

Gai is willing to fight all four of them, but wants to start with Shurato. When the other three try to intervene, Shurato implores them not to attack. He believes that his best friend Gai still exists somewhere within this savage stranger and that somehow he can still reach him. To prove his sincerity, he casts his weapons and armor aside and continues to fight fiercely, all the while pleading with Gai to once again become the friend he has known since childhood. The other three cannot help but respect Shurato's pain and watch without interfering.

Gai soon has Shurato at his mercy, and as memories flit through Shurato's mind, one particular memory makes Shurato wonder whether Gai can be saved after all. Sensing Shurato's' hesitation, Gai moves in for the kill.

Unable to stand idly by any longer, Reiga deflects Gai's sword before Shurato can come to any further harm. When Gai launches his *Shippu Marouken* at Hyûga, Ryôma and Reiga, Shurato decides that Gai's possible salvation isn't worth the lives of his friends. Summoning his *shakti* Shurato joins with the other three in their battle against Gai.

Beginning a simultaneous incantation, the four link their *soma*s into the *Juuou Mandarajin*. Gai's powers are no match against the four of them and the seals on the temple break open. But something even more remarkable has happened: as the four recover from their massive expenditure of energy, Gai offers to help Shurato to his feet. His evil has been purged.

But before Shurato has a chance to celebrate the return of his friend, a shaft of dark *soma* streaks from the heavens, enveloping Gai and spiriting him away. Shurato, cursing Indrahh, realizes that the best way to get revenge is to charge the final crystal sphere and be on their way to Tenkûden to confront the traitor.

As the five of them, including Lakshu, contribute their *soma*, the fourth spire of *soma* stretches out to the heavens. As the four pillars of energy meet, energy cascades out of the sky into the sea, summoning the massive gate to Tenkutai, *Heiseimon*, out of the churning waters. The group, victorious but battered, prepares for their journey, unsure of what they will find on the other side. ■

ANIME JA NAI

A Continuing Series on the World Behind the Screen

Compiled by Mark Simmons and Julie Davis

ANIME MYTHS

It was the dark ages of anime fandom. Synopses were rare, and subtitling all but unheard of. Primeval anime viewers, deaf to the mysteries of the Japanese tongue, were left with only their own interpretations of the mysterious events on their screens to guide them. A significant pause? Obviously a declaration of some importance! A meaningful glance? It must be love! Two characters look remarkably similar? Clearly they're related!

Soon, well-intentioned but completely misguided elaborate theories to explain the otherwise totally baffling (along with some out-and-out lies spread by those who wanted to look "in the know") became the stuff of anime legend.

A classic example is the ever-convoluted, angst-ridden world of *Gundam*. Because *Gundam* never showed any sex and had virtually no romance, filthy-minded fans had to read between the lines when it came to the sex lives of their favorite characters. As *Gundam* presents a distinctly Puritan narrative on-screen, the viewer could only guess as to the nature and extent of behind-the-scenes hanky-panky.

But now we present the cold winds of truth and translation. Have a cherished interpretation? Have you always secretly thought maybe that...? Prepare to have your fondest pretensions stripped away by a by-no means-comprehensive sampling of some of our more cherished Anime Myths.

SEQUELS THAT NEVER HAPPENED

TRUE OR FALSE: *Orguss* is the sequel to *Macross*

FALSE!

Oh, sure, it had those Mikimoto character designs, transforming plane-mecha and it moved right into *Macross*' vacated time slot. But while *Orguss* was certainly intended to appeal to fans of the previous series, there was no story continuity between the two shows of any kind. Though early-80's anime fans had little information and less episode footage to work from, one fact alone should have tipped us off to the fact that this was no *Macross* sequel: *Orguss* had no idol singers.

TRUE OR FALSE: *Megazone 23* is the sequel to *Macross*

FALSE!

While the defunct production company Harmony Gold should probably shoulder some of the blame for this confusion—producing a film drawn largely from *Megazone 23* footage and titling it *Robotech the Movie*—primeval anime cultists were quite capable of deluding themselves on this count; after all, the movie had designs by Mikimoto, a scruffy youth, transforming mecha, a modern city aboard a spacecraft, an alien invasion that wiped out the Earth and, to clinch the matter, an idol singer.

TRUE OR FALSE: *Macross II* is coming soon

FRIGHTENINGLY TRUE!

After years of equating a sequel to *Macross* with hell freezing over, the forces of unbridled commercialism have conspired to spawn a legitimate sequel to the hit soap-opera-in-space. For years, fans were taunted with articles and ads for a sequel in the Japanese press (including promotional shots for something called *MegaLord*), but years went by with nothing but a rehashed OAV special to show for it. Now *Macross II* is a terrifying reality—complete with the obligatory idol singer.

TRUE OR FALSE: *Five Star Stories* is the sequel to *L-Gaim*

THAT DEPENDS!

While Mamoru Nagano's self-indulgent fantasy epic is not *officially* related to the TV series he co-created with perennial Gundam hack Yoshiyuki Tomino, the events of *Heavy Metal L-Gaim* fit right into the *Five Star Stories* chronology—around the year 4100. (Note that "Ladios Sopp" is almost "Poseidal" spelled backwards.) However, at the rate Nagano produces manga it may be another 2,000 years before he actually gets to *L-Gaim*'s time frame, since one year of *Five Star* roughly equals two years of real time.

TRUE OR FALSE: A new *Yamato* movie, *Desslar's Story*, is in the works

FALSE!

You have been deceived again! They got *Bladerunner* designer Syd Mead to design a new Yamato and displayed it at all of the conventions just to mess with your minds.

EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE

TRUE OR FALSE: In *Akira*, Tetsuo and Kaori are brother and sister

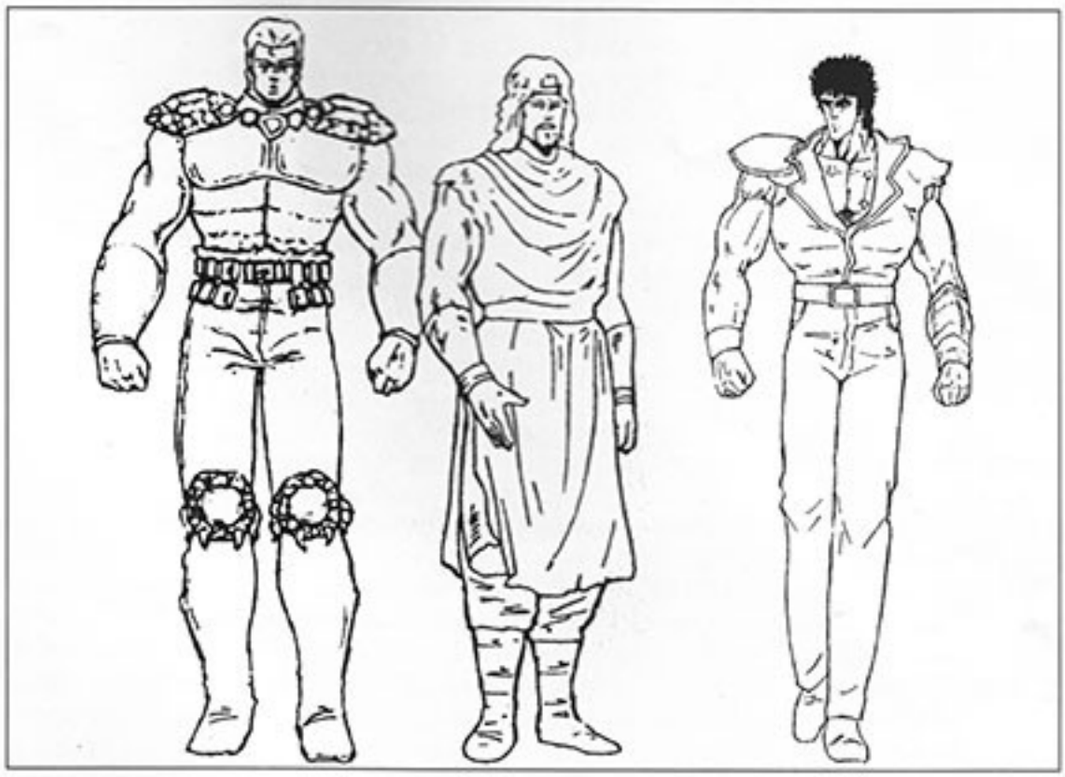
FALSE!

At least, given the sexual nature of their relationship, we devoutly hope not.

TRUE OR FALSE: Quazan Olibe is related to every male member of the cast of *L-Gaim*

ALMOST ENTIRELY FALSE!

The eventually lobotomized biosoldier referred to all her male friends as "onii-chan" (brother), but the first to bear this label, bland hero Daba Myroad, actually turned out to be her foster-brother. Everyone else was just a good friend.



TRUE OR FALSE: All the *Northstar* brothers were really brothers

FALSE!

Well, they were *adopted* brothers. But as far as genetic similarity goes, only Ken had that cool haircut and torn-leather fashion flair. It seems that these guys are related only by cruel fate, not by blood.

TRUE OR FALSE: Captain Harlock is Kodai of *Yamato*'s older brother

FALSE!

Leiji Matsumoto, who seems to have a fetish for deathly emaciated males with monocular vision, slapped an eyepatch onto the designs for *Yamato* hero Kodai's long-lost older brother. While the eyepatch was peeled off in the final show, the damage to susceptible American fans with coveted *Yamato* Roman Albums was done.

ERRONEOUS DEMISES

TRUE OR FALSE: Joe of *Gatchaman* actually dies of cancer caused by his Gatchaman wristband

FALSE!

This rumor began when fans misinterpreted masculine wonder Joe's exhibition of his really cool tan.

TRUE OR FALSE: Amuro and/or Char die at the end of *Char's Counterattack*

WHO KNOWS?

Gundam writer Tomino isn't telling, and the movie itself left the matter utterly up in the air. Perhaps the only reasonable answer is that they'll be back if there's enough money in it.

TRUE OR FALSE: Desslar in the movie *Yamato II* is actually an android

FALSE!

Although Desslar did perform the lung-defying feat of floating unprotected through open space for an indefinite amount of time before his corpse was retrieved by Zordar's flunkies, this is perhaps because the animators wanted to avoid the stomach-turning task of depicting explosive decompression. In the **movie** *Yamato II*, he died like everyone else. In the **TV series** *Yamato II*, he managed to avoid ejecting himself out the airlock and thus remained available for lucrative future sequels... like everyone else...

SEX

TRUE OR FALSE: Nausicaä doesn't wear underwear

FALSE!

The flesh-tone leggings sported by the eponymous heroine of Miyazaki's movie *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* caused understandable confusion for viewers, leading to several years of (male) anime fans wandering around with permanent squints from peering up the feisty wind-rider's skirt. Truly an embarrassing situation for all concerned.

TRUE OR FALSE: Bright Noah and Mirai Yashima of *Gundam* get married because both have no whites in their eyes and so are obviously genetically made for each other

PROBABLY TRUE!

After all, after the One Year War they produce a pair of similarly optically-impaired offspring. But by the movie *Char's Counterattack*, the entire family has been granted ocular improvements, rendering this unique genetic line as mundane as any other.

TRUE OR FALSE: At least one of the *Saint. Seiya* characters is actually a woman in drag

MAYBE!

Fans, perpetually puzzled by the dubious sexuality of these beautiful *bishonen* (beautiful young men), have speculated as to the sexual nature of the lovely Andromeda, whose long, silky green hair and distinctly pink, feminine armor has caused guffaws of disbelief and croons of lust from fans around the globe. Perhaps the allegations of cross-dressing are the result of prudish fans unwilling to realize that these are the 90's, and men can have firm young bodies and glittering, glowing, tear-filled eyes if they want to.

TRUE OR FALSE: Char Aznable is the stud of the the Gundam Universe

MAYBE!

In a series where any evidence of carnal escapades is limited to indirect inferences, Char Aznable has amassed an unsurpassed track record of potential sexual relationships. In *Gundam*, he takes the young Lalah Sun under his wing, and perhaps under his sheets, while rumor among the Zion troops has it that he is shacking up with his boss, the beady-eyed Kishiria Zabi. In *Zeta Gundam*, psychotic Newtype Hamaan Khan experiences a mind-meld flashback wherein she envisions herself draped over Char's shoulder—a childhood crush, or erotic memory? Meanwhile, Char himself is engaged in a long-term dysfunctional relationship with AEUG defector-to-be Reccoa Lando. And in *Char's Counterattack*, fawning aide Nanai Miguel is scathingly jealous of pubescent Newtype boy toy Quess Paraya's relationship with the Aryan superstud. And that's not even mentioning the rumors about him and Garma Zabi.

TRUE OR FALSE: Char Aznable is gay (or at least bisexual)

MAYBE!

Since it appears that Char has boffed almost everything female in the *Gundam* series, it seems just as likely to the prurient-minded that he must have indulged in a little male bonding as well. Specifically, this rumor developed from a scene in which the dripping wet Char, with a distinct gleam in his eye, towels himself dry in front of military school pal Garma Zabi. Romantic liaison, or just comfortable intimacy between two good friends? You see what you want to see...

Have you heard any good ones lately?

Send us your favorite anime myths, and why you believed them, by **11/31/92**. We'll print the best ones in a future issue of ANIMAG. Legitimate myths and misunderstandings only, please.

Address to:

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ANIMAG GIVEAWAY

We're cleaning house! Instead of announcing the winners of the "Fabulous Five Star Giveaway," we're going to extend the dates for the contest and add extra prizes—such as lovely signboards from guests of honor at AnimeCon '91, animation cels from various shows, and anything else we can get our hands on. If you entered the Five Star giveaway, don't fret—you're automatically entered in this new, extended drawing. Winners will be announced in ANIMAG #3.

To enter, send a post card to

ANIMAG Giveaway
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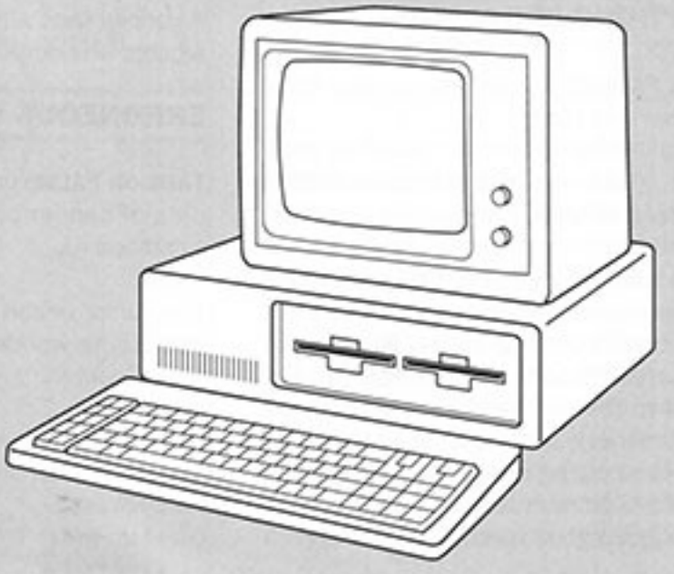
San Francisco, CA 94131

ANIMAG BBS

Feel the need to discourse on matters animated? The ANIMAG BBS, "The Valley of the Wind," is still up and running. Set your modems to 2400-8-N-1 and call 415/341-5986.



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